

CHANDAMAMA

AUGUST 1996

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for 'Saga of Ashoka
the Great'

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Lovable, blind Chacha
Kunwar. He's been my
parents' guide. The least
I can do is help him
cross safely.



Aha! This time Dad's
got the flu and Mum's
told me to give him a
dose of medicine.



Gangu Bai has coolly
taken the day off. Leaving
Radha Mausi and me in a
soapy mess.



Before that rich glutton
of a Raju snatches my
Kaju Barfi, let me give it
to poor Smita..



Naughty Timmy has got
himself hurt. Now this lil'
Doc will set him right.



I'm helping Uncle Rajeev
with the car repairs.
Though Mum said "I'll be
a spanner in the works".



With Chandra, my maths
teacher, numbers are fun.
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CHANDAMAMA

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Vol.27 SEPTEMBER 1996 No. 3

MAHABHARATA: Soon after King Jayadratha makes his unsuccessful attempt to kidnap Draupadi when the Pandava princes are away on a hunting trip, sage Markandeya calls on them and narrates the story of Savitri who marries Prince Satyavan, then leading the life of an exile. She is told that the prince has only one year's life left to live. Savitri keeps a constant vigil on her husband. On the fateful day, she pleads with the God of Death to spare her husband's life. Markandeya tells them how she is able to save the life of Satyavan, and compares Draupadi with Savitri.

LAZY BUT WISE : Narayana is a lazy-bones. It does not matter to him if he misses a meal because he has not earned enough to fetch him food. His people, neighbours, and even some of the villagers are desperate about his attitude, and they very much wish to reform him. The question is: who will bell the cat? His mother pours out complaints about him to her brother. He tries to advise his nephew. A sanyasi in the town is all praise for Narayanan's wisdom. The uncle is confounded. His nephew a wise man?

PLUS the comics **Immortal Friendship**, the next instalment of **Coastal Journeys**, and **Golden Hour** to help you enjoy your leisure-time.





Founder: CHAKRAPANI

Controlling Editor : NAGI REDDI

Wanted : A uniform pattern of education

Isn't it a paradox that parents find it extremely difficult to get admission for their wards in certain schools, whereas in the same place, teachers of certain other schools themselves go about searching for children to fill their classrooms to meet official directives?

What are these directives? A class must have a minimum 32 students. When this number exceeds 50, there must be two divisions, and if there are more than 90 students, there has to be three divisions, and so on and so forth. A school with only lower primary classes must have four divisions and a minimum 100 children. That school will have four teachers, including a headmaster. If there are less than 100 students, the school will be considered uneconomical and might be closed down, and the four teachers will be thrown out of employment. One can, therefore, imagine the anxiety of the teachers to ensure the minimum strength so that their jobs would be secure.

The question may be asked : Can't the pressure on the other schools be eased by diverting those children anxiously awaiting admission in them to the schools run by the authorities? The answer lies with the parents, because most of them, if not all, wish their children to have "English" education, which is ensured by the so-called "public" schools run by private organisations. This phenomenon is peculiar to Indian cities and towns.

Those who own and run schools in a place – whether they be private organisations or government agencies – should plan the pattern of education to make it uniform, so that the major criterion for admission should be the proximity of the school from the homes of children. This alone can ensure equal distribution of the student population among schools.

A WINDOW ON THE WORLD

A second woman Prime Minister

Bangladesh had its first woman Prime Minister in Begum Khaleda Zia from 1991 to 1996. She came back to power in the last February elections, which critics described as "farical", because all the Opposition parties had boycotted the poll. They demanded fresh elections under a neutral caretaker government. Following countrywide agitations, Begum Zia resigned and a caretaker government was appointed in March. Fresh elections were held on June 12, and a coalition government came into being, with Sheikh Hasina Wajed as Prime Minister. In her, Bangladesh has a second woman Prime Minister.

Sheikh Hasina is the eldest daughter of Sheikh Mujib ur-Rahman, who is generally considered as the Father of the Nation. He led the freedom struggle under the flag of the Awami League and fought for the independence of East Pakistan, which had been carved out of the original Bengal Province of British India and which was being ruled from far away Islamabad, capital of Pakistan. A civil war against the despotic military rule resulted in an exodus from East Pakistan to Indian territory and soon India was saddled with this refugee problem. A stage came when India could not but go in for force to enable these Bengalis to return to their homeland. The Indo-Pak war of 1971 ended with the liberation of East Pakistan and formation of a new nation called Bangladesh.



Sheikh Mujib ur-Rahman became its President in January 1972. On August 15, 1975, he and all the members of his family, who were with him in capital Dhaka, were brutally murdered. Eldest daughter Hasina and a sister were in Germany at that time, and thus escaped the massacre.

Bangladesh went through a period of turmoil. In 1977 General Zia ur-Rahman took over as President. He was assassinated in 1981. In 1982, after a bloodless coup, Lt. Gen. Husain Mohamed Ershad became head of state and imposed martial law. In 1986, the martial law was lifted, and elections held. Gen. Ershad's Jatiya Party won and he continued to rule till 1991, when the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, led by Begum Khaleda Zia, widow of Gen. Zia ur-Rahman, captured power in the elections. Gen. Ershad was convicted for corruption and imprisoned. Meanwhile, on her return to Bangladesh in 1981, Sheikh Hasina took over the leadership of the Awami League.

In the June 12 elections, the Awami League emerged as the party with the largest number of seats (146), while the BNP could muster only 116 seats, and the Jatiya Party won in 30 seats. As the Awami League did not have absolute majority in the 300-member Jatiya Sangsad or parliament, it had to seek the alliance of another party. From inside the prison, Gen. Ershad assured the support of his Party and Sheikh Hasina formed her 25 member cabinet, which includes two members from the Jatiya Party. Though a coalition, hers would be "a government of consensus", declared Prime Minister Hasina in her maiden speech to the Sangsad.



The Statue

King Gobindvarma of Gopalpur was very keen to build a magnificent temple for Lord Vishnu. He sent for the best known architect in the kingdom, Nagayya, who agreed to undertake the work and gave his word that he would complete it within a year. The king had already selected a site for the temple – not far away from the palace. Nagayya put up a small hut at the site and lived there with his father.

First, he made a design of the temple. Then he began a search for the proper kind of stones for the pillars, ceiling, and roof. He roamed the nearby forest and located boulders and stones which had to be cut and given the necessary shapes.

Now began a search for the stones from which the idols would be carved. He could not come across the right kind so easily. The people who had accompanied Nagayya were getting restless. They wanted him to call it a day. "After all, we've come all this

distance," said Nagayya, "and it's not yet dark. Let's continue the search for some more time."

Reluctantly, they went with him deeper into the forest. After some search, they came upon a golden hued piece of stone. Nagayya thought that it would be ideal for the main idol. They heaved it on to their cart along with other stones and began their return journey to the capital. On the way, he reminded the others, "Whenever we set out with a particular objective, we should not leave the job in the middle. I'm not trying to say that you shouldn't have any rest. But that can come after the purpose has been achieved."

Like the others, Nagayya too was very tired by the time he reached his hut. Without wasting much time, he went to bed and slept well. He had a dream. A divine-looking damsel stood by his side and said, "Nagayya, I'm from the heavens. Because of a curse, I've been turned into a stone. You're a



talented sculptor. You must carve my figure out of it; only then will I come out of the curse."

Nagayya woke up with a start, and shook himself out of the dream. He convinced himself that it was only a dream. No damsel had really come to him with a plea like that. The stone was for the main idol, and so he could not use it otherwise, could he?

He was unable to go back to sleep. True, the stone had a strange beauty; and it had a golden glow. He waited at the window for the first rays of the sun. By then his father, too, had woken up and noticed that Nagayya was looking worried. So he enquired. Nagayya told him of his dream.

"My son, I had also noticed," said

the old man, "that the stone you brought yesterday has some special qualities. It has to be carved with care. Who knows, your dream might not be true? Anyway, you do one thing, go and tell the king about your dream."

Nagayya met the king and narrated the dream to him, and described the stone and its special qualities. The king then sent for the royal astrologer. He sat crosslegged and meditated in silence for sometime. He then made certain calculations and looked at the king and Nagayya alternatively. "Your majesty, Nagayya's dream is true," he said. "The stone has certain divine properties. There's a story behind it. There was a sculptor among the demons. He was Mayan. He had a disciple called Rayan, who fell in love with a damsel from the heavens. He decided to carve her figure in all her beauty and expressed his desire to her. The damsel posed for him, so that he could sculpt her figure. After he had given the finishing touches, he showed it to her. The damsel gave a loud laughter and, with scorn on her face, said: 'Is this my figure? It looks ugly! Nothing of my beauty has been captured in the figure. I never knew you had no talents.' And she turned her face and began walking out. Rayan was furious. He cursed her that she would turn a mere stone on the earth. I won't, therefore, advise you to use the stone for the main idol. Instead,

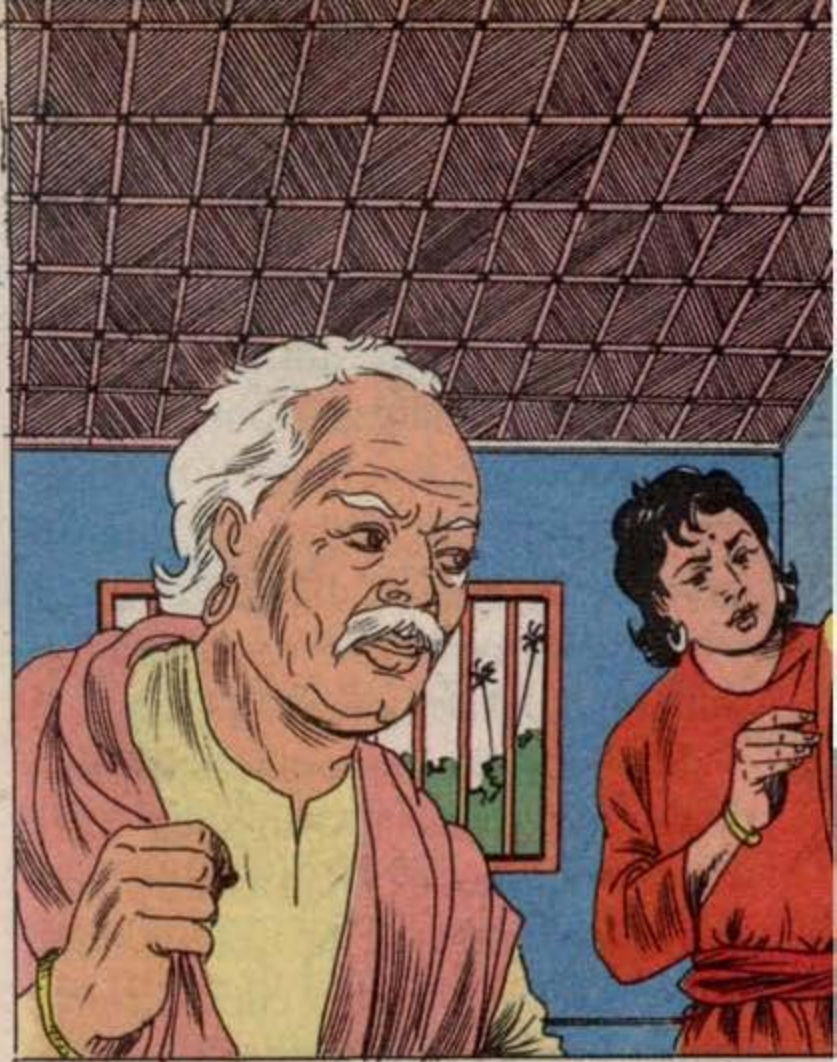
you may carve a figure out of it, and that person would remain alive as long as the sculpture lasts."

Both the king and Nagayya listened to the royal astrologer's narration with great interest and wonder. "Nagayya, you may sculpt my figure!" said the king.

Nagayya was still perturbed, but he did not show it. He would now have to find another piece of stone for the main idol. Anyway, he decided to abide by the royal command. He, however, thought he would consult his father before he started work on the sculpture. The old man's advice was something else. "Don't be guided by anybody. Whatever you feel like doing, do it with conviction and self-satisfaction. An artist should not be afraid of anyone."

That night, the divine damsel appeared once again in his dream. "The stone is really me, Nagayya. You must, therefore, carve my figure. It was not proper of the king to have asked you to sculpt his figure. He was being selfish about it. He thinks he'll remain alive for long and can rule the country for several years more."

Nagayya was in a dilemma. How could he solve the situation? On one hand, he had to abide by the king's orders; on the other, he was facing a request by the damsel to free her from the curse. He contemplated for a long while. Then he came to a decision. He would carve the



damsel's figure. He got up before dawn and went for a bath. Afterwards, he sat in meditation in front of the stone, thinking of only the heavenly maiden, and then took up the chisel. As the blade ran along the sides of the stone, Nagayya thought that it was smiling. He did not have to strain much on the stone; it was almost melting in his hands. Soon, the stone took the shape of the heavenly beauty. Nagayya was happy.

By the time he had given the final touches to the sculpture, ten days had passed by. Nagayya could not take his eyes off his handiwork. It was the same figure that had appeared to him in his dream. He felt proud of himself, and at his work.



The king, who had been told about the sculpture, came to see it, along with the queen. What a lovely figure, he thought. She could not but be a most beautiful damsel from the heavenly world. He lost himself by looking at the figure without lifting his eyes. But who could be the girl on whom Nagayya had modelled his sculpture? he wondered.

Suddenly he remembered something, and turned to Nagayya. "But where's my statue? I had asked you to sculpt *my* figure on the golden-hued stone. Instead, you have carved a girl's figure, haven't you?"

"True, your majesty," confessed Nagayya. "I was unable to sculpt your figure. Please forgive me. I had to use the stone which, as I had told you, was once this very same damsel under the spell of a curse. But, your majesty, you were praising my work skyhigh a little while ago. Did you forget that?"

"Arrogant fellow!" muttered king Gobindvarma in great anger. "For

having disobeyed my orders, I've to punish you, Nagayya! And do you know what that punishment is going to be? Hanging!"

As the king turned around to call his soldiers to take Nagayya to the gallows, there was a loud noise, like that of a thunderbolt. Suddenly, darkness enveloped the whole place, and there were indications of a storm brewing. It began raining heavily, and the sky was lit with lightning. In front of their eyes, the golden statue broke itself into thousands of pieces.

The king remembered what the royal astrologer had told him. That the person on whom it is modelled would live only till the statue remained intact; the person would also die then. Suppose Nagayya had sculpted *his* figure? What would have happened to him then? Gobindvarma shuddered at the thought of death.

So, Nagayya was prudent in obeying the dictates of his own mind. The king was happy.





listen to either of us. However, we have been observing some improvement in him. Maybe he got excited when he saw all of us together. Moreover we were all busy otherwise, and we didn't attend to the children."

"My boy is well-disciplined," claimed Anand with some pride. "Once he did some mischief, and I whacked him. After that, he has never been mischievous. Beating is the best medicine for teaching discipline. If you start tolerating mischief, then there won't be an end to it. Be careful, Aditya, you must check your boy from now on."

Aditya was very upset over the remarks made by Anand. He continued to think about them even about

Anand and family left for their house. He took Anand's advice as gospel truth. So, whenever he found Amol mischievous, he would beat him hard. Sometimes he even beat him with a stick, so much so, the boy got scared of his father, whom he looked at as a cruel person. Amol began avoiding his father, and hid himself from his sight.

One day, Aditya's guru, Vidyanath, called on him. After they had enquired about each other, Vidyanath asked his former *sishya*: "Where's your son? My grandson? You see, for a guru, his *sishya* is almost like a son; so the *sishya*'s son becomes his grandson!" Vidyanath laughingly added. "Where's he? Please call him. I would like to meet him."

Aditya turned to his wife, who was listening to their conversation from a respectful distance. "Lakshmi, where's Amol? Bring him here. Tell him my guru wants to meet him." He then went out for a while.

Lakshmi led Amol into the presence of Vidyanath who drew him by his hands and affectionately raised him on to his lap. "Ah! That's good. You're a clever boy, Amol. But where's Aditya? Where has he disappeared?" Vidyanath asked of Lakshmi.

"Sir, he won't come here," replied Lakshmi. "If he were to come, then Amol will run away. He's scared of his father." She then told him of the transformation that had taken place



in both father and son ever since Anand paid a visit.

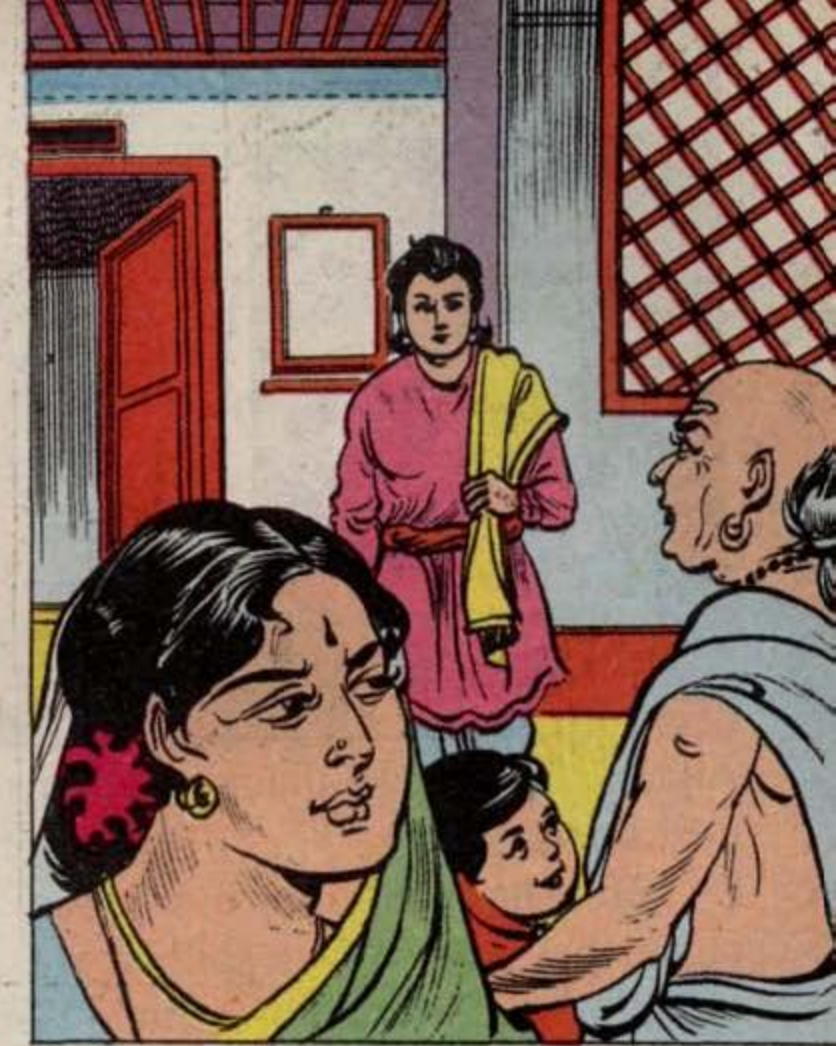
Vidyanath then called Aditya in. "You shouldn't be guided by what other people say," he told him. "You shouldn't have been cruel to your son."

"But I wasn't guided by other people," explained Aditya. "It was Anand, my own friend, and he was only telling me of his own experience. And I accepted his advice."

"Don't I know Anand?" remarked Vidyanath. "If children do any mischief, one should correct them and try to reform them, and not beat them. Good words of advice are stronger than a rod. You must understand that."

Aditya was silent for some time. "Come, let's call on Anand," said Vidyanath. "We shall find out what's happening in his home."

Guru and shishya then went up to Anand's house. It was quite late in the evening. Anand was very happy to see his guru and schoolmate together. He welcomed them with great warmth. During their conversation, they had occasion to talk about Amol's mischiefs. When Vidyanath mentioned the topic, Anand interjected. "Oh! I know a lot about the boy's mischief. I was able to watch him when I went to Aditya's house. In fact, I gave some advice to Aditya. I can't tolerate children doing mischief. They should be checked immediately



and punished. You must bring them up strictly."

Vidyanath looked at Anand for a while. "Do you know, Anand, that there are birds which can separate milk and water? Similarly, all children are not bad or mischievous. And it is the duty of the parents to distinguish the good and the bad in children."

Anand remained silent. He busied himself with arranging dinner for his guests. Leaves were placed for all three of them. Ashwin went and brought three tumblers with water to drink. "Take the tumblers from him," cautioned Vidyanath. "The boy might spill the water here and there."

"No, let him handle them," said





Golden Hour TEASERS



1 For hundreds of years people have been trying to catch a glimpse of this monster that is supposed to be living in a lake, in Scotland. What is this monster called?

2 Tibetans and Himalayan mountaineers claim to have seen a half-human half-animal creature in the snow covered mountains. What is this creature called?



3 Ships and aeroplanes avoid moving in a certain area in the Atlantic Ocean where over the years countless ships and aircraft have disappeared without a trace. What is this place called?

4 Why is a bird's skeleton so light?



5 Humans have seven bones in the neck. How many does a giraffe have?



6 In a famous film made in 1933 based on a novel by Edgar Wallace, a gigantic gorilla runs amok in New York. What was the name of the film?



7 Which bird lays the biggest egg?



8 Sharks are constantly on the move. When do they stop moving?



Make a Cut-out Dinosaur

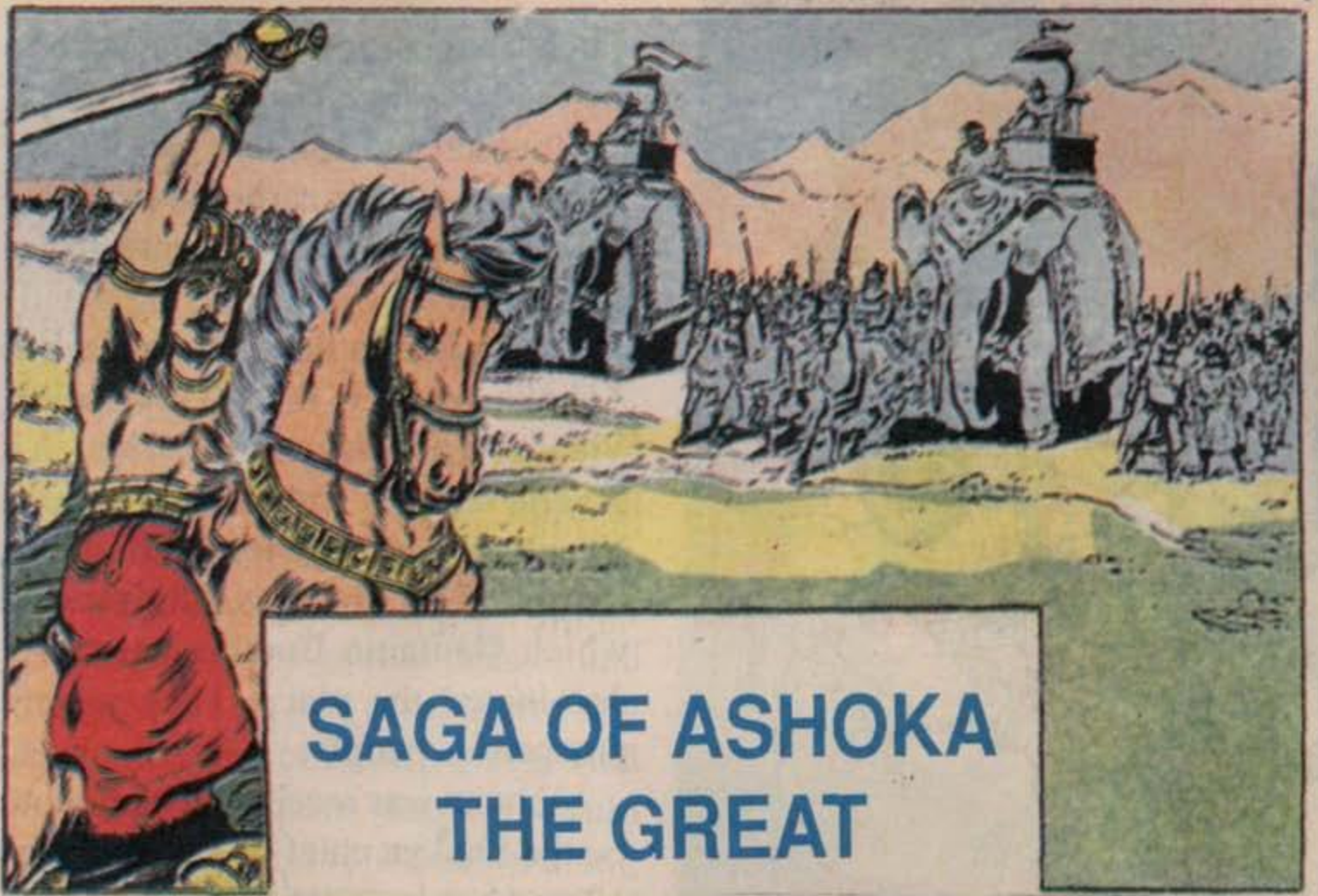


Enlarge this cut-out of a dinosaur on a stiff card (you may trace from an enlarged photo copy). Trace all the broken and dotted lines. Cut out the design, colour it. Now your design is ready to be folded. Before you fold make a groove along each dotted or broken line with the tip of a scissors.

Fold the body along the dotted lines (.....) downwards so that the dots can still be seen after folding.

Fold the body along the broken lines (- - - -) upwards, so that lines cannot be seen. Gum the two halves of the tail together. Gum the portions marked in red, as shown.





SAGA OF ASHOKA THE GREAT

(The story so far: King Vindusara of Magadha has several sons, of whom two are prominent. Sushima is the eldest and the Crown Prince; Ashoka, born to a Brahmin's daughter, whom the king had married, is ambitious and daring. Sushima hates Ashoka and attempts to kill him when he returns from Taxila after suppressing a rebellion. Ashoka escapes the attempt.)

"Ashoka, my son, it is one thing to successfully fight; it is another thing to successfully set things right. You've proved your merit in the first; we wish to try your merit in the second," King Vindusara, reclining in his bed, told the prince.

"Order me, my lord!" said Ashoka, humbly.

"More important than Taxila to our empire is Ujjain, the headquarters of the prosperous province of Avanti. The viceroy we had appointed

to rule the province is dead. Will you mind stepping into that vacant position?" asked the king.

"If that is what you desire, Father!" was Ashoka's ready response.

"Good, then get ready to proceed there. We've a team of trusted officers in that lovely city on the river Kshipra. But should you choose to take some confidants of yours from Pataliputra, you're free to do so. I'll ask the general to provide you with able escorts," said King Vindusara.

7. A SAVIOUR FROM NOWHERE



Ashoka went into his mother's apartment to seek her blessings. "My son, I named you Ashoka because by looking at you I forget my *shoka* (sorrow)," she said with tears in her eyes. "I'll continue to feel anxious and sad as long as you remain away from me. But I've my own consolations...."

"Wouldn't you tell me what your consolation is, Mother?" asked Ashoka.

"You'll probably be safer in far away Ujjain. You've terrible enemies here, my son! And who knows if the sinister arms of the enemies would not reach Ujjain! My child, never neglect to be on your guard," said Queen Subhadra.

On an auspicious day, Ashoka be-

gan his expedition to Ujjain, accompanied by a hundred bodyguards. A few nobles and soldiers had left for Ujjain a few days earlier to make the necessary preparations there to receive him.

It was late in the afternoon when Ashoka reached the lovely valley, Vidisha. Though a village, it had in it several temples and, what is more, a Vihara or hermitage for the Buddhist monks. The Shakyas, the race to which Gautama Buddha belonged, dominated the place. They were a prosperous people.

Ashoka was received with honour by the Shakya chief of Vidisha, who offered him hospitality. But the prince chose to stay in his camp outside the village. There were a few hillocks there. The top of one of them had a flat surface. The tent for Ashoka was perched there.

The scenery around Vidisha charmed Ashoka. It was a foggy dawn and he decided to enjoy a stroll around the hills. He was tired of being followed by his bodyguards. He asked them to leave him alone.

The sun had just arisen, but it was dim because of the mist. The prince stood on a hill, gazing at the golden rays infiltrating the blue mist. All was quiet but for the chirping of some birds in the groves around the hills and on the river-bank.

Filled with a serene peace, Ashoka took a step forward.

"Stop! Please stop at once!"

Who was it to command *him*? The voice was forceful but sweet. Surprised, Ashoka looked back. A few yards behind him stood a young lady. In the mist she looked like a mysterious fairy who had just descended on the rocks.

"I'm sorry to shout like that, but there's a precipice just in front of you!" the girl said, her voice even sweeter this time.

The mist was getting thinner and thinner. Ashoka saw to his horror that he stood on the brink of a gorge. Had he taken one more step, he would have tumbled and rolled down along a slope marked by sharp-edged stones, to reach a pit and meet with certain death.

Ashoka turned and approached the young lady. She would have very much liked to run away, but her sense of decency did not let her do so.

"I'm sorry, O noble Prince, I didn't even offer you my greetings," she said with humility.

"Offer me greetings? But for you, I would have been dead by this time!" Ashoka exclaimed mildly.

"Saved you were, not for me, but for the Grace of Shakya Muni, the Buddha," said the young lady.

"Who're you? What were you doing here?" asked Ashoka.

"My name is the same as that of this place, O Prince. They call me Vidisha. I'm the daughter of the



Shakya chief who met you yesterday. I was returning from a cave yonder, in which lives a very old Bhikshu, a saint. I look after him," said the young lady in reply.

Ashoka had met several girls of royal families, relatives of his stepmothers, who visited the Maurya palace at Pataliputra. But never had he met a girl so dignified and so beautiful at the same time.

"I don't know how to thank you, Princess Vidisha..."

"I'm no princess, O Prince, though I come of a Shakya family."

"Don't mind my habit, Vidisha, but you're far, far more than a princess to me. You're an angel who saved me."

"I beg your pardon, O Prince, I



must remind you that it is not I who saved you. I was here to attend on one of the devotees of the Buddha. In other words, it is the Grace of the Buddha which saved you. Evidently, your life is valuable," said Vidisha and, bowing to the prince, she turned and left the place.

There was so much sweetness and kindness in the wide world! But inside the palace, there was only envy, ambition, hatred, and rivalry! Ashoka brooded on this revelation and decided to spend a full day for rest and relaxation there before moving towards Ujjain. He loved the valley, but now it was difficult to say which he loved more, Vidisha the valley or Vidisha the chieftain's daughter.

He informed the leader of his bodyguards of his decision to stay back for the whole day. "Enjoy yourselves in whatever way you please, but without disturbing me and without causing any inconvenience to the villagers," he said.

Ashoka bathed in the river and roamed the valley aimlessly, and hummed to himself. He enjoyed the kind of freedom which he never had at Pataliputra and which, he knew, he would never have once he was at Ujjain.

His bodyguards had no reason to bother him. They remained engrossed in the songs and dances to which three wandering dancing girls and their accompanying flutists and drummers entertained them. Indeed, the girls knew their art well. If they would amuse the soldiers with their light songs or recitations for a while, they would move them to pity and sympathy with a song on a sad theme in the next hour.

The soldiers invited the troupe to dine with them at night. "Why don't you let us help you with the cooking?" proposed the girls. The soldiers were only too happy to agree to it.

In the afternoon, the Shakya chief met Ashoka again and invited him to dine at his place. Ordinarily Ashoka would have declined it, for he had been warned by the general and the Prime Minister never to touch food offered by strangers. But the possi-



bility of meeting Vidisha once again inspired Ashoka to accept the invitation.

As expected, Ashoka was entertained to highly delicious items cooked by Vidisha and her mother. His heart was filled with joy as many times as he saw the serene face of Vidisha in the light of the lamp. How much he wished that he could linger on there and talk to Vidisha! But he must resume his journey in the morning.

The sky was clouded. The chief-tain and his friends, holding torches, took Ashoka to his tent. On their way, Ashoka saw his soldiers eating, drinking, and making merry, served by the dancing girls. He did not mind.

It began to drizzle soon after Ashoka retired to bed. He expected a sweet sleep, full of sweeter dreams.

He was not disappointed. It was a truly restful night for him. But, at midnight, a shriek woke him up with a jolt. He sat up. Two hooded dusky figures were inside his tent. Alas, one of them had raised already a dazzling dagger.

At once Ashoka sprang to his feet and drew his sword from under his bed. The two figures shot out of his tent. Ashoka followed them and shouted for his bodyguards.

But his soldiers, generally alert, who keep vigil on his tent by turns, were lying under their own tents at a lower tier of the hillock. None of

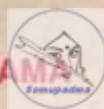


them came out despite Ashoka's shouts.

But someone else pursued the fleeing figures. Before long, he threw one of them down and at once Ashoka took hold of the person — a woman! Before long the pursuer caught the other one. Another woman!

By then some of Ashoka's bodyguards had arrived on the spot. Luckily, the clouds had cleared and the moon was shining quite bright. The soldiers were horrified to see the two women captives. They were the same dancing girls who had entertained them. It was clear that they wanted to kill the prince.

But who woke up Ashoka with her shriek? Who else but Vidisha?



"I felt a strange misgiving when I saw these girls amusing the soldiers throughout the day. I don't know why, but I felt that they were not simply dancing girls. They looked too intelligent, too alert to be that. While I was returning from the cave of the Bhikshu, after nursing him, for he is ill, I saw the dancing girls and their companions slowly coming towards the hillock. I knew, if I challenged them, they would kill me first. Luckily I saw Yasa, who is like a brother to me, passing by. I requested him to be at the foot of the hill and stealthily climbed the hill myself. When I saw one of the girls flashing a dagger before entering the tent, I knew there was no time to lose. I gave out that shriek!"

"So, it was Vidisha who was destined to save me once again!" exclaimed Ashoka.

"Once again I must remind you that it was the Buddha's Grace that saved you!" said Vidisha.

But there was no time for sweet talks. The situation was perplexing and grave. By and by it became clear that the soldiers had been drugged. Under the pretext of preparing some delicacies for them, the dancing girls and their accompanists had mixed some dangerous potion in their food.

But where were the other members of the team of assassins? Those of the soldiers who were less dazed, ran here and there, but in vain. It was Yasa who detected one of the male members of the team hiding in a bush. About to be captured, he made a dash for the river. Yasa chased him and captured him just when he was about to jump into the water.


The two women and the man, their hands tied, were led into Ashoka's tent.

"The first thing we must find out is, who commissioned them to do this heinous job!" said Vidisha's father.

"That's right," said Yasa.

(To continue)





New Tales of King Vikram and the Vampire

BEST SUITOR

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time; gusts of wind shook the trees. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits. Flashes of lightning revealed fearsome faces.

But King Vikramaditya did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought down the corpse. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground, with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse spoke: "O King! You seem to be making untiring efforts and without respite, as if you wish to achieve something. I pity you. Instead of enjoying comfortable sleep on a cozy bed, you're still coming after me. Do you think that your birth on this earth will do good to at least some people? If it doesn't benefit anybody, it might even prove harmful to some. If you don't agree with me, I shall try to convince you by telling you the story of Pratapvarma of Pritampura." The vampire then began his narration.

Pratapvarma was not a king of any kingdom, unlike the heroes of so many of the stories which the vampire had told Vikramaditya earlier. He was a



husband?"

"Suppose you ask someone how many stars are there in the sky," said the sanyasi, "and if he were to tell you that he and you could sit together and take a count of the stars, such a person would definitely make an ideal husband."

Parvati was such a conscientious girl that even in her dreams, she was careful to gather information which would help her. She was keen to know how she could find the most suitable husband for herself! She got the answer, and now would not have to worry later in real life.

Suddenly she woke up. The dream was still in her memory. What a strange dream! she thought. However, she did not reveal it to anybody, even to her close friends. One afternoon, she joined them and went to a nearby mangrove to while away their time in fun and frolic. They played hide-and-seek, making good use of the trees.

In her hurry to hide behind a tree, Parvati stepped on a snake, which raised its hood and began hissing aloud. She shrieked in terror. Suddenly, someone with strong arms pulled her aside. The snake slithered away. Parvati followed its movements for some time, unmindful of whoever had saved her at the nick of time. After the snake disappeared from her sight, she turned her head, and saw Pratapvarma.

youngster who had lost his parents early in life. He did not have any near relatives who could take care of him. So, he has forced to fend for himself even when he was a boy. Whatever work came his way, he did it and earned a meagre living.

Parvati, a young girl also of Pritampura, one day had a dream. A *sanyasi* appeared before her and said: "You've a lot of worries. All that will vanish if you were to choose a suitable husband for yourself and marry him. You'll then have a bright future."

The maiden was not quite satisfied with the sanyasi's solution to her problems. "O most revered one! Tell me, where do I search for a suitable

He was looking at her intently, probably wondering how she happened to be in the mangrove at that time of the day. Parvati was no stranger to him; and she also knew him by sight. However, they were meeting for the first time, and she thought he was as handsome as a prince. He had a perfect figure and was quite tall, too. "I'm grateful to you for saving me from the snake. But for you, I would have been dead long, long ago," she managed to express her gratitude.

Sudden happenings sometimes create situations which may become turning points in one's life. If Parvati had been careful, she would not have stepped on a snake and let out a cry of fear, and Pratapvarma would not have been attracted to the place. Anyway, she suddenly remembered her dream.

"At least now I could hold your beautiful hands," said Pratapvarma, "thanks to the snake!" he added with a smile. "You've no idea what thrill I got at that moment, what happiness, for the first time in my life! I must express my gratitude to you!"

'How nicely he talks,' Parvati exclaimed to herself. 'Would he be a suitable husband for me?' she wondered. She checked herself from giving expression to her feelings. She decided to bide her time and not do anything impetuously. Not that she had any doubt about the possible outcome, because whatever had hap-



pened till then appeared to have been ordained by the divine power.

"You're really clever," she blurted out. "But could I ask something?"

"Go ahead, don't hesitate," responded Pratapvarma.

"Could you tell me, how many stars are there in the sky?" she said, and anxiously waited for an answer.

"I've some idea," said the young man, confidently, "but I would wait till I marry and, with the help of my wife to count the rest of the stars. I would be able to give you the exact figure only after that."

His answer was nothing unexpected, and so Parvati smiled. A trace of shyness came over her face. She could not remain in his presence any





longer. She ran away from the place.

Meanwhile, something had happened at her house. A suitor named Chandrakant had called on her parents and expressed his desire to marry Parvati. He claimed that he was a rich person and that he commanded considerable wealth. Naturally, Parvati's parents found his proposal attractive and an alliance with him desirable.

After he went away, Parvati disclosed her dream to her parents and her meeting with Pratapvarma in the mangrove. She also told them of her decision to accept him as her husband. She appeared confident that her dream was coming true.

But her father was not impressed. "How much is Pratapvarma worth?

Practically nothing!" he thundered. "You were carried away by his handsome appearance, weren't you? How can I send my daughter away with a pauper like Pratapvarma? Nothing doing! Just forget him, I tell you, my daughter. I've decided to give your hand to Chandrakant and no one else! He appeared quite adamant.

What a situation! The daughter wanting to marry someone she loved though he was a pauper; and the father determined to get her married to a rich young man. Isn't love greater than wealth?

Parvati knew her father's adamant nature. She pleaded: "Father, please give me a few days to prove that my dream would come true. After all, you seem to care more for wealth; just wait and see Pratapvarma acquiring more wealth than what Chandrakant can command."

"You're a fool, Parvati!" said her father, with a sneer. "Can Pratapvarma make a million within one year? Impossible! Whereas Chandrakant is already a millionaire, do you know that?"

"Pratapvarma won't take all of one whole year to become wealthy," argued Parvati. "If my husband is someone like what I've been told is my dream, then Pratapvarma will come to enjoy a wealthy status in no time. You'll then believe what I tell you now."

Her father conceded her point and

said, "All right, let it be as you wish. My only anxiety is, you should not be left to suffer later in life."

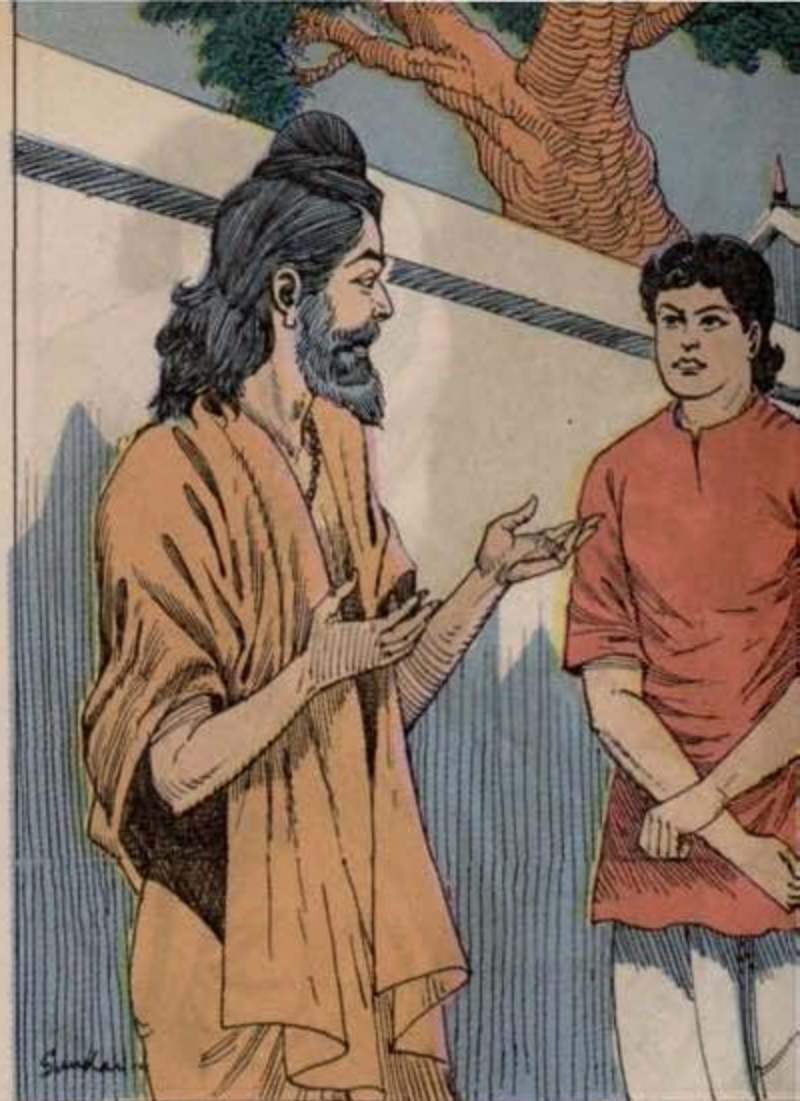
Parvati heaved a sigh of relief. It was not so easy to get her father agree to another person's viewpoint and it was also not his habit to change whatever stand he took. Now for once he appeared sympathetic to her wish.

She sent word to Pratapvarma and told him what her father would wish him to be—a rich man within a year. He took it as a challenge. Somehow or other he should make money and then marry Parvati.

He left for the city and accepted whatever work that came his way. Many months later, he counted his savings—he had about a thousand coins; nowhere near a million. He was not desperate, but continued his efforts to save more.

One day, as he was walking along the streets, he saw a bull trying to hit someone with its fearsome horns. He wondered what had enraged the animal. He rushed to the help of the poor man who happened to be a *sadhu*. He drove away the bull. The sadhu was grateful to the young man who had saved his life. He enquired about him and, when he was told that Pratapvarma wished to become a rich man, he said: "There's an easy method to amass wealth, but the path is full of hurdles and hazards."

"I don't mind even sacrificing my life," said Pratapvarma. "Whatever



be those hazards, do tell me. Let me make an attempt."

"All right," responded the sadhu. "At the eastern end of this city is a forest. The mountain there has a cave, holding thousands and thousands of gold coins and other wealth. But guarding all that wealth is a giant who does not stir out either during the day or at night. If you are able to hoodwink him and go inside the cave, you can lay your hands on the treasure!"

Pratapvarma took leave of the sadhu and went straight to the forest where he searched for the cave. At the mouth of the cave he found the giant lying across but sleeping. He was scared at the very sight of the giant, but he took courage and moved closer





to the giant, who now woke up. His eyes were almost spitting fire with anger. "I see! You're trying to sneak into the cave hoodwinking me, aren't you?" He paused for a moment, and then continued. "So you were sent by that sadhu. Am I right?"

The giant did not wait for an answer, but began telling the intruder about himself. It was a strange story.

"In her previous birth, Parvati was my daughter. I got her married to someone she didn't like. She suffered in life, and committed suicide. Later, she was reborn as Parvati.

"The sin I committed made me a giant in my own re-birth. The man who had married her despite her dislike for him is now a sadhu. We both

are aware of our previous birth. And we're trying to repent the sin we had committed then. It was the same sadhu who appeared before her in her dream, and advised her how to choose a husband for herself. In her previous birth, she had loved someone and wished to marry him. That was you!"

Pratapvarma was happy and felt comforted. "That means, you'll help me achieve my aim in life?"

"Of course, you need not have any doubt about it," assured the giant. "You may take a million coins from here, and then go and get married to Parvati. But I want you to do me a favour."

"Tell me, what can I do for you?" said Pratapvarma excitedly.

"After your marriage, and within one year, you must see that a girl is married to someone she doesn't like!" replied the giant.

"How will that help you?" queried a baffled Pratapvarma. "What benefit will you get?"

"This cave," said the giant, "contains a lot of wealth—gold coins, ornaments.. and whatever is taken away from here, that much comes back in no time. But the cave has to be guarded day and night. And that can be done only by a giant. Suppose the marriage of Parvati and Chandrakant, whom she doesn't like, had taken place, then her father would have turned a giant and come here to guard the cave. And Chandrakant would have turned a

sadhu and been wandering here and there, to serve his punishment. By that, we both would have earned our reprieve. Now that wouldn't happen. That's why I ask you this favour—of helping me and the sadhu, by marrying two persons who don't like each other."

"Suppose such a marriage does not take place at all?" asked Pratapvarma. "Then what would happen to you both?"

"How can you presume that such marriages won't take place?" said the giant, laughing aloud. "By our act of uniting Parvati and you, we both should be relieved of our present status. But someone should come to guard this cave!"

"All right, I shall do as you direct," said Pratapvarma. "I shall now take two million coins and go home

and get married to Parvati."

"Don't forget your promise to me!" the giant reminded him as the young man took leave of him.

The marriage of Parvati and Pratapvarma took place on a grand scale. One day, they had a visitor — Dhanapal. "My daughter is of marriageable age. She wants to marry a pauper, but I can't agree to such an alliance. You were once almost a pauper, but suddenly you became wealthy. How did you achieve that? Would you take me into confidence and tell me the secret of your success? I can then make my would-be son-in-law a rich man. Please help me."

"One cannot become wealthy just like that, unless one is fated to," explained Pratapvarma. "It's true that we're leading a happy life, but it's because we have money. So, I would



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suggest that you marry your daughter to someone who is already wealthy.”

Dhanapal was satisfied with the answer and he went away determined to do as advised by Pratapvarma.

The vampire concluded his narration there, and turned to King Vikramaditya. “Was the advice given by Pratapvarma to Dhanapal correct? If a girl is forced to marry someone she doesn’t like, doesn’t it tantamount to spoiling her life? Shouldn’t Pratapvarma have remembered his own experience and allowed the girl to marry whoever she loved? His advice, forgetting his own experience, was not something expected of him. Don’t you think so? If you have the answers to my questions and still you decide to remain silent, do I have to remind you what’ll happen to you? Your head will be blown to pieces!”

Vikramaditya thought for a while and then said: “Pratapvarma was obliged to the giant who had helped

him. He had given a promise to the giant, and so he had to keep his word. If he had failed to keep his promise, Pratapvarma would have met with adversities in life. Just because he felt sympathetic towards Dhanapal, the world was not going to benefit. There would still be umpteen fathers who would insist on their daughters marrying only persons chosen by their parents, and not liked or loved by the girls. Nothing much would have happened if Pratapvarma had given such an advice only to one father. Dhanapal might not have heeded to that advice. But Dhanpal married his daughter to a rich man much against her wish and he became a giant and went to guard the cave. Thus the other giant earned his reprieve.”

The vampire realised that the king was too smart for him. He flew back to the ancient three, carrying the corpse with him. Vikramaditya drew his sword and went after the vampire.



Along The Malabar Coast

Text: Meera Nair ♦ Artist: Gopakumar

Our journey along the Malabar coast takes us to the most historical of Kerala's ancient ports – Kodungallur or Cranganore, known in ancient times as Muziris.

The port of Muziris served the Phoenicians, Egyptians, Arabs, Greeks and Romans, who brought robes, eye-pigments, copper, brassware and wine and took back besides pepper, Malabar monkeys, tigers, parrots and elephants.

The first Jews landed at Kodungallur more than 2000 years ago. Christianity was introduced to Kerala by St. Thomas, the Apostle, who arrived at Kodungallur in 52 A.D. The first mosque was built at Kodungallur in 800 A.D. by the last Chera king, Cheraman Perumal, who embraced Islam. It is a simple, tile-roofed mosque, made of wood and stone. It does not have a minaret or a dome like in other mosques and it faces the east and not Mecca. A huge bronze lamp, the type found in the temples of Kerala, is kept lighted inside the mosque.

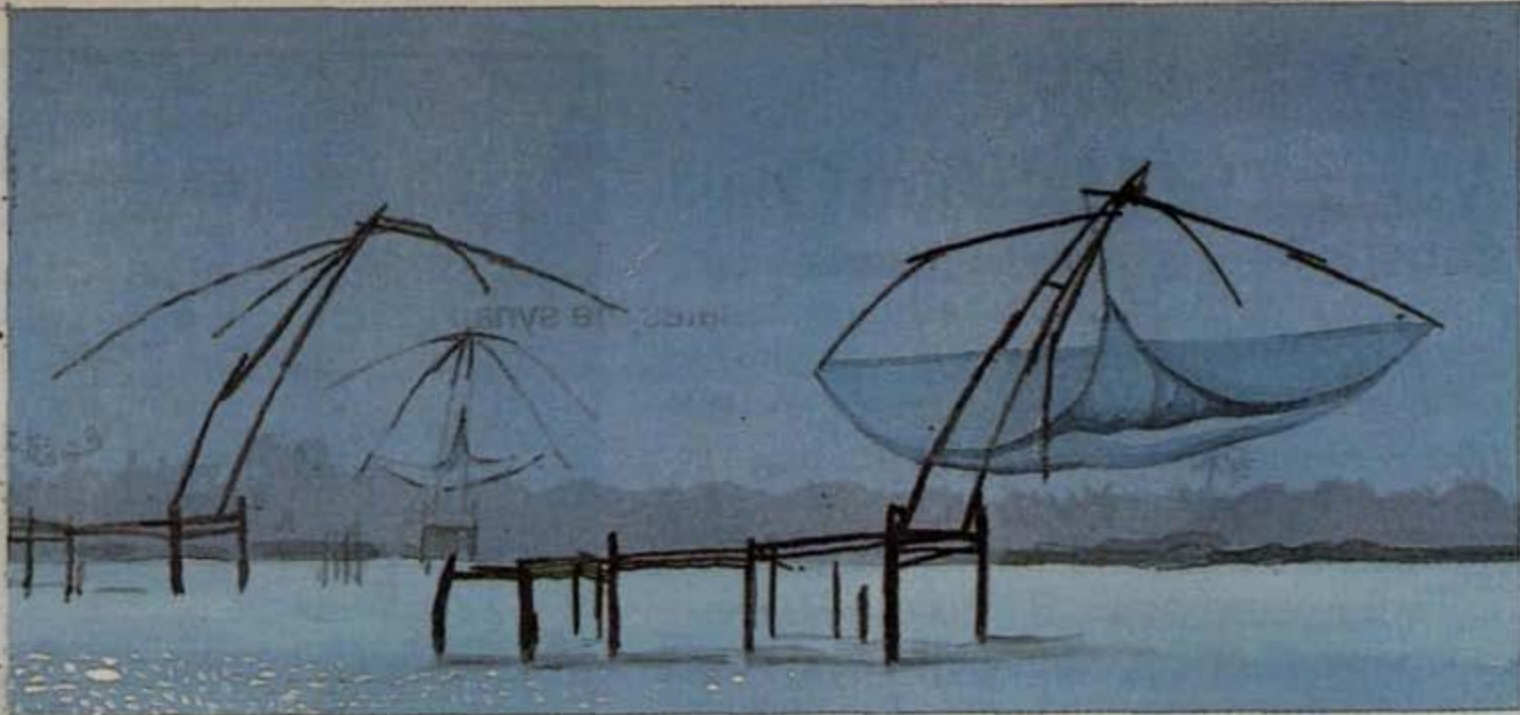
Kodungallur is important to Hindus because the Bhadrakali temple, the most



The first mosque

important shrine dedicated to the Mother Goddess, who is believed to guard Kerala's shores, is located here.

In 1341, a devastating flood in the Periyar river choked the mouth of Kodungallur's harbour and made it useless for trade purposes. The river changed its course and forced its way into the sea opening up the Kochi harbour.



The harbour at Kochi is one of the finest in the world and is called the 'Queen of the Arabian Sea'. It offers complete protection against the fury of the monsoons.

Kochi comprises a number of islands and a part of the mainland. The Willingdon island which was dredged from the sea bed, the Bolghatty island and the Vypin island (where Chinese fishing nets can be seen billowing against the skyline) are three of these islands.

The Chinese fishing net was introduced into Kerala by traders from Kublai Khan's court. The huge net is lowered into the water at the end of a pole, which rotates around a fulcrum. A lantern on top attracts fish into the meshes. At least half a dozen men are needed at the other end of the pole to lift the haul out.

Fort Kochi, which lies by the side of the harbour on the mainland is believed to be the oldest European settlement in India.



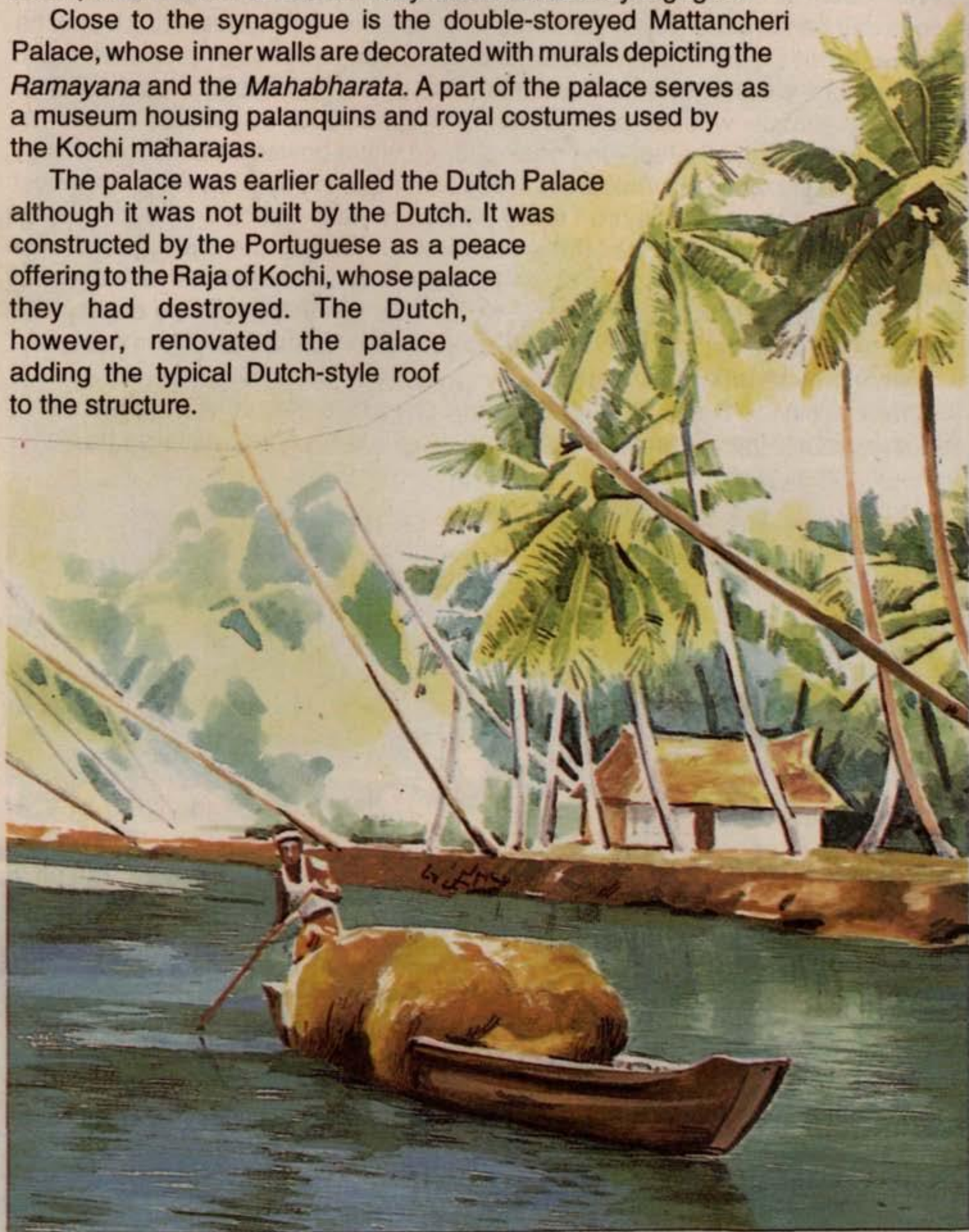
The Church of St. Francis, built by the Portuguese in 1510, is the oldest existing European church in the country. The mortal remains of Vasco da Gama, who died at Kochi in 1524, were interred in this church. His gravestone, enclosed by polished brass railings, can be seen on the church's southern side. His body, however, was taken to Portugal by his son in 1538.

The Church of St. Francis

Mattancheri, to the south of Fort Kochi, is the home of the Kerala Jews. The number of Jews has fallen drastically as many of them have migrated to Israel. The Jewish colony at Mattancheri was established in the 4th century A.D. The synagogue, called the *Paradesi* synagogue, was built around 430 years back. A clock tower, built in the mid-18th century dominates the synagogue.

Close to the synagogue is the double-storeyed Mattancheri Palace, whose inner walls are decorated with murals depicting the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. A part of the palace serves as a museum housing palanquins and royal costumes used by the Kochi maharajas.

The palace was earlier called the Dutch Palace although it was not built by the Dutch. It was constructed by the Portuguese as a peace offering to the Raja of Kochi, whose palace they had destroyed. The Dutch, however, renovated the palace adding the typical Dutch-style roof to the structure.



**A boatman of
Mattancheri**

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BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN



The palace's floor gives the impression of being made of polished black marble, but is actually made from a mixture of burnt coconut shells, charcoal, lime, plant juices and egg whites. The art of making such flooring, unique to Kerala, has been lost over the years and there are very few places where it can be seen today.

From Kochi all the way southwards to Kollam one can see a continuous chain of lagoons and backwaters. The Vembanad lake, stretching from Kochi to Alappuzha and covering an area of 79 sq.miles, is the biggest expanse of backwaters in Kerala.

In the months of August and September, the banks of Alappuzha's backwaters throng with people who come to watch the spectacular 'Chundan Vallam' or snakeboat race. The 130-foot-long beak-shaped, steel-bowed *vallams* manned by over a 100 rowers move at breakneck speeds accompanied by gutsy roars. The most famous of these races, the Nehru Trophy Boat Race, takes place on Independence Day to commemorate the visit of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to the State. The people of neighbouring Kuttanad (the rice bowl of Kerala) entertained him with a snakeboat race held on the outskirts of Alappuzha. Nehru was so thrilled with the display that he got into the boat that had won the race and sailed on to the Alappuzha boat jetty, disregarding all security arrangements.

After returning to Delhi, he sent a silver trophy to the then chief minister asking him to present it to the winner of the boat race to be held every year at the same place.



THE LOST BIT OF NOSE



Ages ago, there was a judge in a town in China. A stout little man was he, with a moustache flowing downward. He was very proud of himself and was too eager to prove his genius. In fact, he was impatient to become famous and make a name. But alas, no cases came his way for a long time after he had managed to get himself elevated to the post from that of an ordinary courtier in the palace.

"These stupid townsfolk seem to be too disciplined and honest. No cases! I doze all day long in the court over a cup of tea!" he would often sadly complain to his wife.

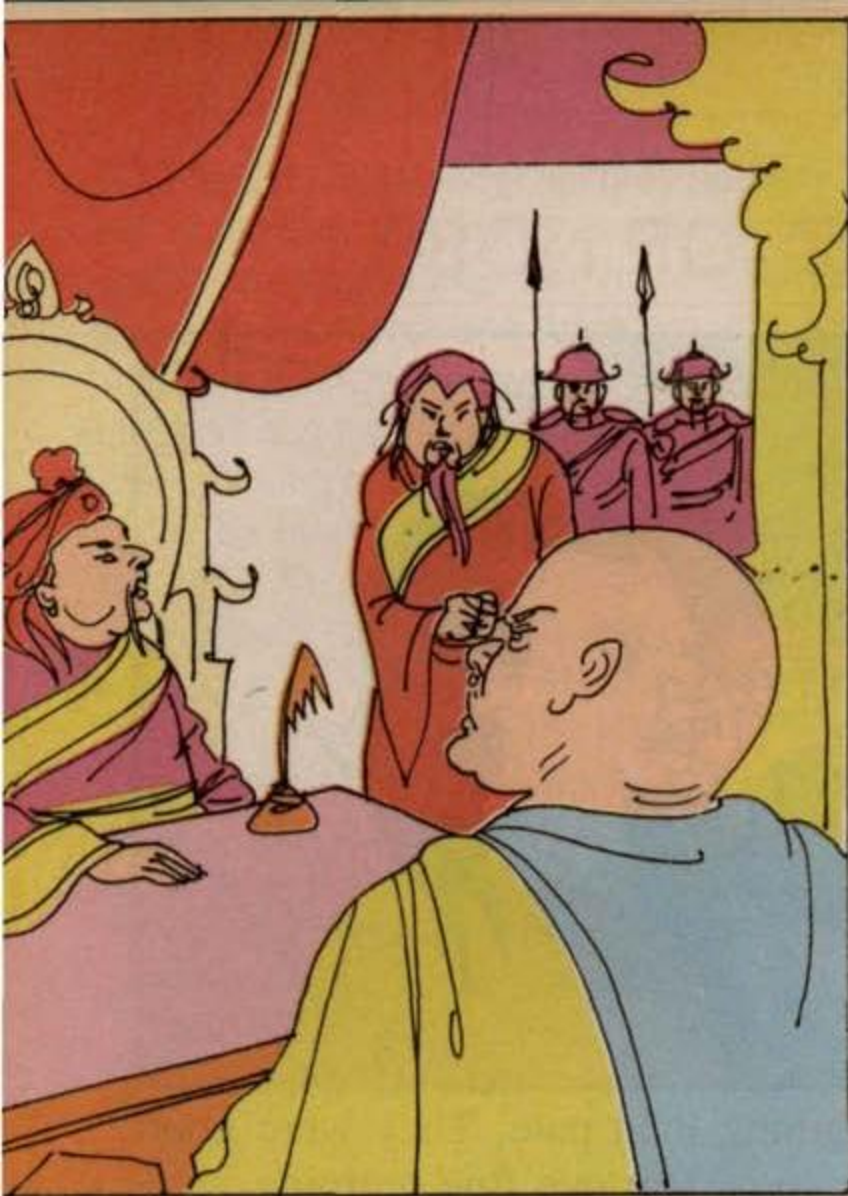
Not much longer had he to wait to show his mettle. In the same town lived a bearded priest with locks of hair, and a clean shaven monk with a

shining bald pate. They were good friends. But one fine morning, they entered into an argument and soon became bitter enemies.

"God sports a smart beard and has long curly locks," claimed the priest.

"How can the Master of the universe sport that sort of unkempt appearance? His face is smooth and clean and his bald head, a shining piece of mirror!" argued the monk.

For a long time they thus went on, none prepared to accept the other's statement. Finally, they lost their temper and came to blows. The monk grabbed the priest's streaming locks of hair and tugging at them, boxed his ears. The priest then pounced on his friend's head but his hands slipped off the smooth oily pate and he fell flat on



his nose. Enraged and humiliated, he took hold of the monk's elephant-like ears and bit a bit of his nose. The monk stood in a pool of blood. The hullabaloo attracted a crowd.

"Something is surely wrong with the world today!" sadly exclaimed a gentleman.

"Yes, if such learned men of the holy orders behave themselves in such a manner, what will become of common people like us?" commented another.

Just then two bailiffs were passing by. Bloodshed was a criminal offence. So, the two holy men were at once arrested in spite of their protests. They were soon presented before the fat round magistrate who was bliss-

fully snoring in his chair. He woke up with a start when the two prisoners were announced, and pounded his wooden hammer loud and clear. It was his very first case and he was anxious to pronounce his verdict at the earliest.

Patting his moustache he asked in a grave resounding voice: "What wrongs have you committed, O pious men?"

"Your Honour, this fellow bit off my nose," complained the monk tearfully.

"I see! He has bitten your only nose! But why did you do it, you naughty priest? Were you hungry?" sternly asked the magistrate.

"I didn't, Your Honour, I swear I didn't do it! He bit it himself," replied the other in a matter of fact way.

"Rogue, you bit your own nose and now you're accusing the poor priest!" shouted the judge at the monk.

"What? I bit my own nose? How could I ever reach it?" he asked, fuming in anger.

"That makes sense!" sighed the magistrate. "You, there, with curly locks! How could he reach his nose so as to take a good bite of it?"

"Sir, he stood on a stool to reach it!" plainly replied the priest.

"You sly monk!" the judge screamed, turning to the other man. "You stand on a stool, reach your nose, bite it off, and then put the blame on an innocent person! Guards! Take



this fellow! Put him behind bars!" the great judge pronounced his judgment.

The poor monk, already bereft of a part of his nose, was beaten and thrown into the lock-up. The priest was asked to produce a surety and was released on condition that he would present himself whenever summoned again.

Then the proud magistrate with his big round self, marched home, happy at the clever way he had handled the case. He related to his wife the proceedings of the day and how wisely he had passed his judgment.

"The king will surely be pleased that he has made the right choice for the Lordship and soon award me with another promotion," he chuckled.

"His Majesty will do no such thing, but sack you straight away the moment he comes to know of the case. For, my dear Sir, no one, however clever, could reach his nose so as to bite it," his wife assured him.

"That's the very point I had raised at first. But the priest explained that the monk stood on a stool! You see, by standing higher up, he could of course reach his nose! It's plain common sense!" piped the confident man of law.

"Dear husband, however high you stand, you cannot bite your nose. Why don't you try it for yourself!" exhorted his wife.

The nervous man stood up on the



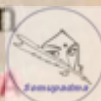
table, opened his mouth wide and snapped with all his might. But alas, he couldn't bite his nose which seemed to be quite far away. Bewildered, he asked at last, "Wife dear, isn't this table too low?"

"Why, then, don't you go up to the roof?" suggested the lady, losing her patience.

So, onto the roof climbed the confused magistrate. But all his efforts went in vain. For, his nose seemed to him to be positioned very far indeed, in the most unattainable of spots. Sadly he gave up.

"You're perhaps right. It looks impossible to bite one's own nose," he admitted at last.

"Now you must at once summon





the priest and try the case once again. Otherwise, people will take you to be a buffoon and it won't be long before you are dismissed!" warned the lady.

"Indeed, the priest deserves a good flogging. I'll get him arrested and ask him to demonstrate how to bite one's own nose!" he said, excited that he had now another chance to prove himself clever.

But his wife had another scheme in mind.

"Tomorrow, I shall accompany you to the court when you try the case. On the dais I'll hide behind the screen beside your chair. You will be in a position to see me but not the others. I'll make signs to you. Follow them while pronouncing your judge-

ment. All right?" said his wife.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed the magistrate.

Both the priest and the monk were brought to the court the next morning. The wise judge pounded his desk with the wooden hammer. All fell silent.

"You, there, you long-haired priest! How dare you lie before me? It's you who has bitten the monk's nose," he charged in an angry voice.

"He bit it himself, Your Honour," hesitatingly replied the accused.

"That's impossible! How could he reach it?" demanded the judge.

"I've already told you, Sir, by standing higher on a stool," said the accused still hopeful of getting away.

"What? But I stood on as high a place as the roof and yet couldn't reach my nose!" observed the agitated judge.

"What's the need of saying all that?" thought his wife and tugged at his gown. When he looked at her, she lifted up her hands with all her fingers stretched out.

"Give the bearded priest two strokes of the whip," he ordered without delay.

'Oh, how lucky I am, and what a kind-hearted man is this judge. He has awarded only two strokes after all this!' thought the priest, showing his back to receive the punishment.

But the lady had meant ten strokes and not two! She tweaked her

husband's gown once again and turned her hands to mean that he had failed to understand her signs.

What could this mean? The clever judge blinked before getting the idea.

"Turn over the priest unto his back and beat him!" he ordered.

The attendants were shocked, for they had never heard of a man being beaten lying on his back. Nevertheless, they had no options but to obey orders.

The judge's wife, losing her patience, angrily ground her teeth at him. But what did the clever man read in her grimace?

The judge understood that it was time to use teeth.

"Bite off the priest's nose!" he ordered at once.

Trembling with rage, the lady tugged hard at her husband's gown, almost toppling him. She ground her teeth furiously and waved her hands to make him stop his men from acting and pointed at herself to mean that he

should try to understand her.

The anxious judge was at his wit's end. He wondered awhile and then pounding his desk, shouted, "Guards! Stop! Don't bite the priest's nose. For my wife here wants to bite it off herself!"

The lady, feeling awfully embarrassed, had to come out in the open, now that her presence had been announced.

"The bit of nose lost is lost forever, unless it can grow again. Now, let both the holy men pray to Providence that the damaged nose becomes whole. Let them also pray for the well-being of all the noses in our land," said the lady.

The people present on the scene applauded the judgement. The report of the trial duly reached the king's ears. He ordered that thereafter the judge would only hear the cases, but the judgement will be delivered by his wife.

-Retold by Anup Kishore Das



Sacred to Hindus, Buddhists

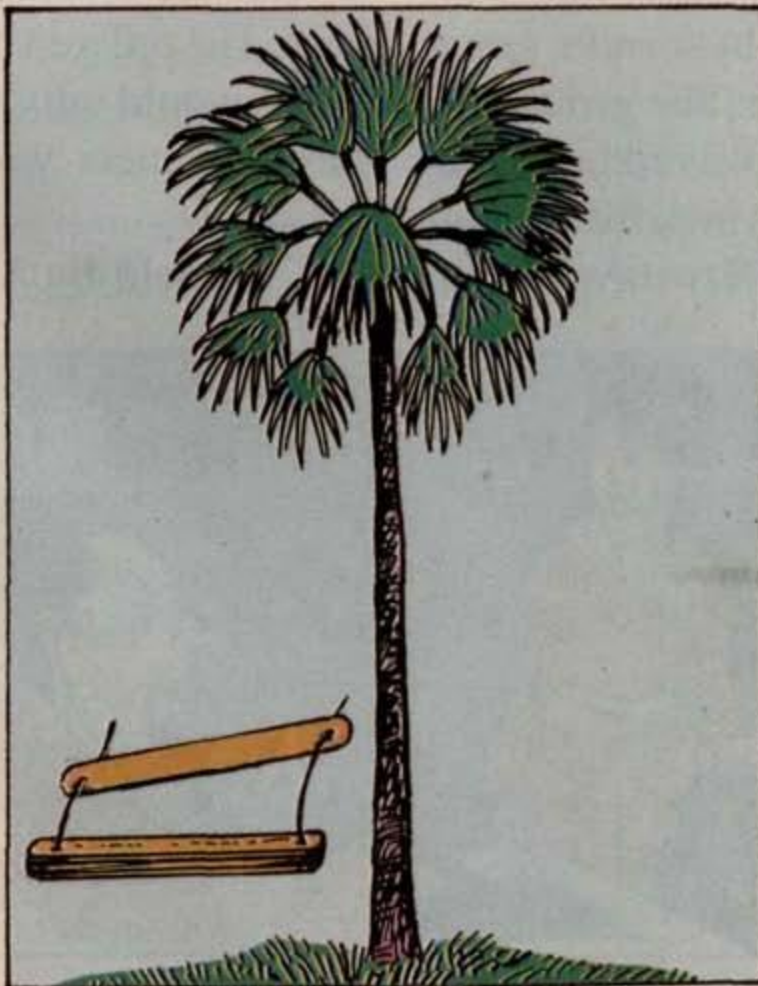
Long before parchment and paper came to be used for writing, it was on palmyra leaves that ancient manuscripts were written. India, Nepal, and Tibet are three countries which had used palm leaves for writing sacred scripts. In Nepal, the practice is still vogue. Many libraries in India have preserved collections of palm leaf manuscripts. In South India, the Oriental Manuscripts Library of Madras University, the Theosophical Society Library also in Madras, and the Saraswati Mahal Library in Tanjore have good collections of such manuscripts. Of course, they were not written with pen and ink. The letters were inscribed with an iron stylus. Palm leaf manuscripts have remained intact for thousands of years. Palm leaves are also used for painting.

The Palmyra tree is known in Malayalam as *Pana* and in Tamil *Panai*. The Telugu name is *Tadi Chettu* and in Gujarati and Marathi it is *Tad*. The Hindi and Bengali names are *Tal* or *Tar*. The fa-

mous Tarakeswar temple in Calcutta has the idol – a Siva linga – carved out of the stump of a tar tree, and hence the name Tarakeswar.

This palm tree is indigenous to India. It grows in sandy soil, from the Upper Ganges to Kanyakumari down south, and on the west coast. The tree generally grows to a height of 30 to 40 metres and has a diameter of 60-75 cm. Like other palms, palmyra too is without branches. The leaves are straight and fan-shaped, and grow in clusters. The branches holding the flowers have a sap which is sweet and tasty. When fermented, it is like *toddy* tapped from co-

conut trees; unfermented, it is like *neera*, the popular drink of Mumbai (Bombay), like tender coconut. The fruit is small; it will have three nuts covered with a white jelly, which is very refreshing in hot weather. The trunk of the tree is used for posts and beams in houses. The leaves are used for thatching and for umbrellas.



UPAMANYU

The young Upamanyu was a disciple of Sage Ayodha-dhaumya. He studied the scriptures well and became a scholar. Even after that, the *guru* did not permit him to leave the *ashram*. Instead, he asked him to look after his cattle.

Upamanyu led the cattle to the green pastures near the forest and tended them well. In the evening he led them back to the ashram.

One day, the guru asked him, "My boy, you're in the meadows for the whole day. What and when do you eat?"

"My master, while the cows graze, I go into the nearby village and collect food as alms and eat," replied Upamanyu.

"To leave the cattle to themselves is not right!" remarked the guru. "Besides, all alms received are to be made over to me."

From the next day, Upamanyu never absented himself from the meadows. Days passed. Again, one day, the guru asked him, "Where do you find your food now?"

"Master, I go into the village for alms after bringing the cows back to the ashram, in the evening."

"Should the householders be dis-



turbed even in the evening?" chided the guru.

Days passed. The guru repeated his question.

"My Master, I drink some milk from the cows," said Upamanyu.

"I don't think I had permitted you to do that!" commented the guru.

Days passed. "Upamanyu! What do you eat now?"

"My Master! I lick the foam on the mouths of the calves after they had had their mothers' milk," said the disciple.

"That's not desirable!" rebuked the guru.

Some days later, one evening the cows returned to the ashram on their



own, but Upamanyu did not come with them. The guru set out in search of him, followed by some of his disciples. As they called out for Upamanyu loudly, they heard a faint response. They followed the sound and saw that Upamanyu had fallen into a deep pit which was perhaps once a well.

"My master, hunger drove me to chew up some strange fruit. They were poisonous. I've lost my sight," said Upamanyu.

"My boy, pray to the gods, the Asvinikumar brothers," advised the guru.

Upamanyu followed the advice. The brothers appeared before him and offered him some food.

But, said the young sage: "I must submit to my guru whatever I receive as alms."

"You're truly wonderful!" exclaimed the twin gods. They restored his vision and he was even endowed with an inner vision. In due course he became an illustrious teacher himself.

So strange were the ways of the ancient gurus to test the sincerity of their disciples. But they knew what they were doing, and they also knew the ability of their disciples.

- One who utters truth at all times obtains eternal bliss.
- Our wisdom is soiled by constant contact with weapons.

– *Ramayana*

DO YOU KNOW?

1. How did Sir Roger Bannister become famous?
2. When astronauts go up in space, they see the blue sky in a different colour. Which colour?
3. Which planet is known as the Red Planet?
4. Where did puppets originate?
5. Who founded Agra? In which year?
6. If Silver Jubilee is the 25th anniversary, what is Paper Anniversary?
7. What language do the gypsies speak?
8. Which country is credited with the origin of the Batik style of painting?
9. Table Tennis had another name before 1921. What was it?
10. What are the four blood groups?
11. What is the measurement of weights for gold and precious stones?
12. Post-boxes are normally painted red. But there was a time when it was given a different colour. Which?
13. Except one, every numeral can be written in the Roman way. Which one?
14. What is the unique feature of zebras?
15. Which is the Land of the White Elephant?
16. Which woman pilot first flew solo across the Atlantic?

ANSWERS

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. He ran the mile in less than 4 minutes for the first time | 16. Amelia Erhart, in 1928 |
| 2. Purple | 15. Siam (present-day Thailand) |
| 3. Mars | 14. No two zebras have similar stripes |
| 4. In Egypt and India | 13. Zero |
| 5. Sikandar Lodi, in 1506 | 12. Green |
| 6. The first | 11. Carat |
| 7. Romy | 10. A,B,O, and AB |
| 8. Indonesia | 9. 'Ping-pong'. The game was invented by a British firm |



Unfit for a fight

★ ***What is meant by the idiom 'to show the white feather'? asks Geetarani Besan, of Godhbaga.***

White feather is generally taken as a symbol of cowardice. If anybody behaves in a cowardly manner, he is described as showing the white feather. The origin is from a white feather in a gamecock's tail, taken as a sign of inferior breeding and, therefore, of poor fighting qualities.

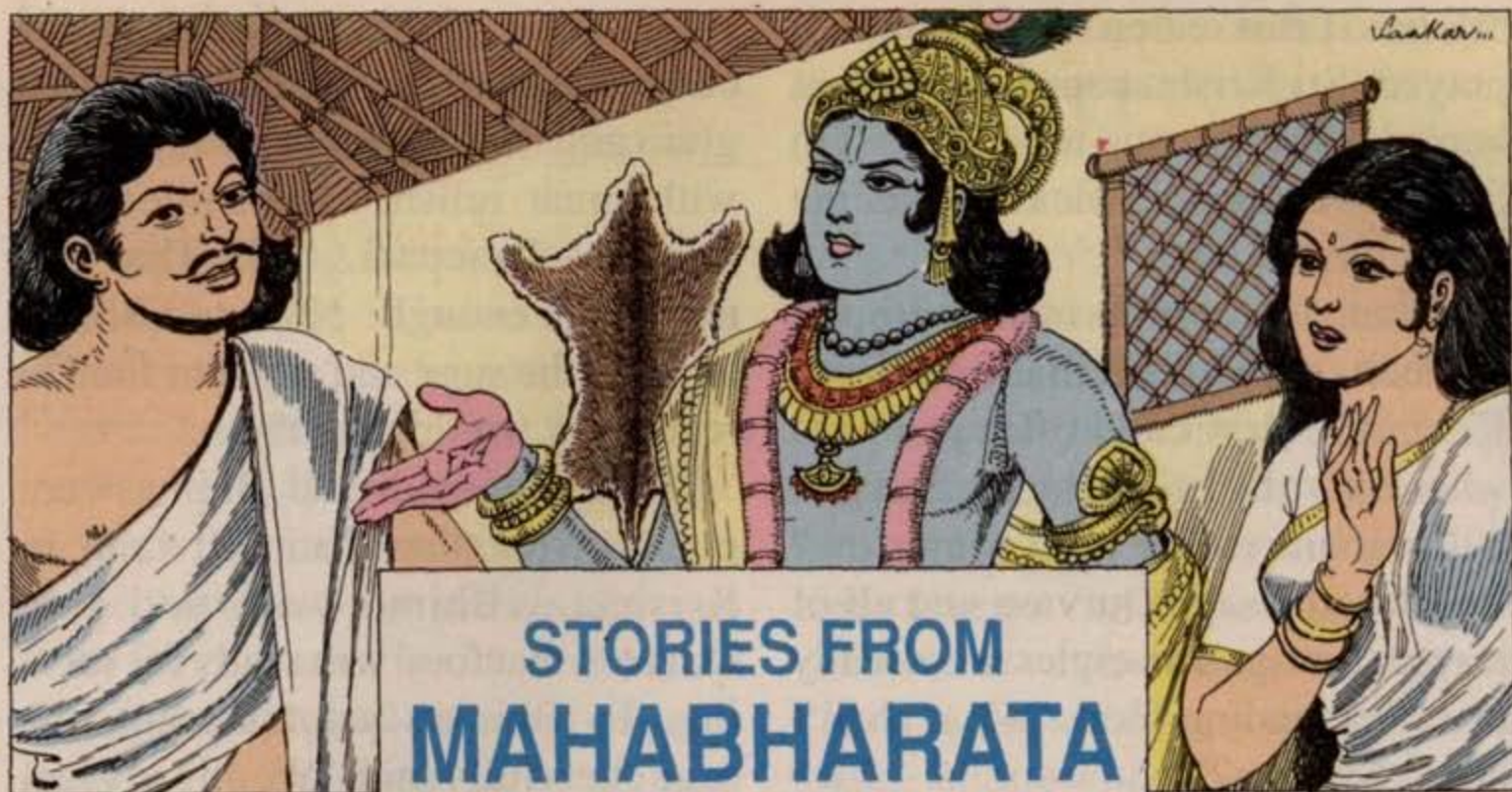
★ ***Upendranath Sial, of Balasore, wants to know which expression is correct: "Can I go out, sir?" or "May I go out, sir?"***

Imagine you are in a classroom, and you wish to go out and want the teacher's permission to do so. "May I go out, sir?" will be appropriate. It is marked by respect to the teacher and indicates your intention to return. Suppose a discussion takes place in your presence and you do not wish to participate, and if you were to get up and tell whoever presides over the discussion, "Can I go out, sir?" it will show your displeasure or predicament and denote your intention to stay away. Grammatically, both are correct expressions, but each of them suits different situations or circumstances. And the proper response will be either "You may" or "You may not" (depending on whether permission is granted or not), and "You can" or "You need not", the latter indicating that the discussion will not continue.

★ ***What does 'to come a long way' mean? asks Devaguptam Dheeraj, of Kothagudem.***

When you say someone has come a long way, you only mean that he or she has achieved a lot of success. You come across a person doing well in his job and you compliment him by saying "he will go a long way" (in his career, profession, business, etc). You can also go a long way towards doing something particular, because achieving it will be an important factor in your life.

★ Reader P. Parameswar, of Kusum Kuhuri, met his friend and enquired after his uncle. The friend told him, "He has retired and is *on the shelf*." Parameswar wishes to know what it means. Just as you leave something on the shelf as it will not require or deserve immediate attention, when a person is put on the shelf, it only means that he has become inactive or his employer does not have any more use of him. If Parameswar had enquired about his friend's sister and if he had replied: "She is on the shelf", it would have meant that she had broken her engagement and was getting old for marriage.



The story so far...

Eleven of the twelve years of exile for the Pandava princes are already over. During this time, they have suffered many privations. At the end of another year, they have to pass one more year in complete hiding or incognito. The condition is, if they are discovered, then they will have to go into exile for another twelve years.

Back in Hastinapura, the Kaurava princes gloat over the suffering of their cousins. Duryodhana, Uncle Sakuni, and the proud Karna go to the Dwaita forest to mock at the Pandava princes. Duryodhana angers the Gandharvas, who capture him. The Kaurava army flees for their life. Duryodhana is released when Yudhishtira intervenes.

The Kaurava prince is embittered at the shame he has to undergo. He does not wish to live any longer. Sakuni suggests: how about a Rajasuya Yaga? But disappointment is in store for him when priests tell him that he cannot perform the sacrifice as his father, the king, is alive. He has, therefore, to content with a Vaishnava sacrifice. But he gets another chance to humiliate the Pandavas. After feeding sage Durvasa and his ten thousand disciples, though with great difficulty, Duryodhana prompts them to visit his cousins in the forest hoping that they will sure earn the sage's wrath.

The sage Durvasa and his disciples arrived at the hermitage of the Pandavas late in the night, and immediately demanded that they be given food. Draupadi was horrified, for the Pandava brothers and she had already eaten, and there was no morsel of food left to feed even one person. How then would she feed as many as ten thousand people? She prayed to

Sri Krishna to come to her help in her hopeless predicament.

It will be remembered that during the first days of their exile, Surya the Sun god had bestowed on Yudhishtira the Akshayapatra, a wonderful vessel which always gave them a never ending supply of food for their daily consumption. Now it was night time, and the vessel was empty. Every bit

bit has been eaten. As Draupadi prayed, Sri Krishna appeared before her and in a piteous tone said: "I'm hungry, Draupadi, please give me some food at once."

Draupadi was now in utter despair at such a request, that too from Krishna. "How can I offer you food when the vessel given by the Sun god will remain empty until tomorrow? Besides, the sage Durvasa and all of his ten thousand disciples are already here, demanding food. What shall I do, O Krishna?"

Sri Krishna merely smiled. "I'm terribly hungry. Go and bring the vessel; let me see whether it contains anything at all!"

Draupadi was in great confusion. She brought out the vessel. When Krishna removed the lid, he saw that at the bottom of the vessel was a

single grain of rice and a tiny bit of cooked vegetable. He picked up the grain and the vegetable and ate them with great relish. He smiled and turned to Draupadi. "Ah! That was more than enough. Now, tell Bhima to go to the sage and say that food is ready and waiting for them."

Both Draupadi and Bhima were puzzled, but they had full faith in Krishna. Bhima went and told Durvasa that food was ready for serving. To Bhima's astonishment, the sage cheerfully said, "We already feel we've overeaten and cannot eat any more. Tell Yudhishtira to forgive us." Soon afterwards, the sage and his disciples departed.

Some months after this, Yudhishtira and his brothers planned a hunting trip. Before setting out, they arranged for Draupadi and their priest,



Dhaumya, to stay with sage Trinabindu in his hermitage, where Draupadi should have been perfectly safe.

One morning Jayadratha, king of the country called Sindhu and an ally of Duryodhana, was passing by the hermitage with a strong escort, when he saw Draupadi walking in the grounds. Thinking that it was a golden opportunity to win favours from Duryodhana, he decided to abduct Draupadi and take her as hostage.

At the sight of Jayadratha's repelling figure, Draupadi tried to run away, but Jayadratha soon caught her and brutally dragged the screaming woman to his chariot. Dhaumya the priest, hearing Draupadi's cries for help, rushed out and tried to stop the chariot, but in vain.

Soon afterwards, Yudhishtira and his brothers returned from their hunting trip. When Dhaumya tearfully explained that Draupadi had been kidnapped, they set off in hot pursuit of Jayadratha who, thinking that the Pandavas would never dare attack his strong force, had camped close by, eager to torment Draupadi with threats to hand her over to Duryodhana and his brothers.

Without any warning, the enraged Pandavas rushed into Jayadratha's camp. Bhima with his great mace and Arjuna armed with the Gandiva bow created terrible havoc among the Sindhu army. Whoever was left in Jayadratha's army fled in terror.

As soon as Draupadi was released, Bhima and Arjuna got ready to chase the fleeing Jayadratha. Yudhishtira laid a restraining arm on Bhima's



shoulder. "By all means, capture the miscreant," he said firmly. "But remember, he's related to Queen Mother Gandhari. So, let no harm befall him."

Jayadratha, scared out of his wits at the thought of the fury of Bhima and his mace, hastened from the battle field, leaving his men to fend for themselves. In his haste, a wheel of his chariot struck a boulder on one side of the path. The chariot overturned, and although he was not badly hurt, Jayadratha was so sore and bruised that he continued his escape on foot. He was soon captured by Bhima and Arjuna.

The luckless man grovelled at the feet of Arjuna and begged for mercy. Bhima stood at one side and roared

with laughter at the sight of this cringing monarch. Taking Jayadratha by the scruff of his neck, Bhima ordered his men to cut off the captive's hair, leaving only tufts to remind the once proud monarch of his abject disgrace.

Afterwards, Jayadratha was taken to the hermitage. Yudhishtira laughed at the comical appearance of the prisoner with his shaven head adorned by odd tufts of hair. But remembering the treatment Draupadi had received at the hands of this uncouth rogue, he in a voice filled with scorn upbraided Jayadratha for daring to molest Draupadi, and threatened him with death if ever he offended the Pandavas again.

(To continue)



IMMORTAL FRIENDSHIP - 4

By BUJJAI

THOUGH RUDELY SHAKEN BY SINGHIDORA'S DECEIT, SUMITRA STARTS ON HIS MISSION UNDETERRED.

The king's men may try to catch me on the way.



AFTER A WHILE, SINGHI DORA ALSO STARTS.



Where're you going?

To save Sumitra from the king's men.



I must also seek his pardon.

Be careful.



SINGHI DORA RIDES AT GREAT SPEED.



I must somehow save Sumitra!

AFTER SOME TIME...

Sumitra! Stop! Stop!



Is it Singhi Dora? What brings him here?



Sumitra! Stop! Don't cross that hill! Stop!



Please stop!

Maybe this is another plot.



Sumitra! Please stop! Don't proceed any further!

Why? Why can't I?



The king's men! They'll try to catch you!

You once cheated me! How can I trust you? Is it another plot?



No, believe me, please! True, I stooped low for the sake of money! Please forgive me!



Come, let's go back!



No, I can't. I must go and meet our Gurudev!



Is it so?

I'm quite determined.



All right. But come with me. I'll take you to your Gurudev by another route.



SINGHI DORA AND SUMITRA PROCEED ALONG ANOTHER ROUTE.



MANY A GOOD COW HATH A BAD CALF

SUMITRA AND SINGHI DORA GO UP A HILL.



THERE THE ROYAL GUARDS ARE POISED TO CATCH SUMITRA



Not arrived as yet?

Would Singhi Dora have cheated us?

Look there! The king's men are waiting for you! Do you now believe me? Let's descend from this side.



THE TWO GET DOWN THE HILL.



There! That's where your Gurudev lives!



MEANWHILE...

Stop! Who're you?



SUMITRA SHOWS HIM THE ROYAL SEAL.



He's our friend.

Oh! Follow me!



MANNERS ARE STRONGER THAN LAWS

SUMITRA
MEETS
GURUDEV

Young man! Why have you come?



The king is anxious about your welfare. I've come to take you back, safe.

Who's that with you?



A friend, Singhi Dora. He gave me shelter and helped me find you.



May he live long!



It's risky for us to go out! The king's men are waiting that side of the hill.



Let me suggest a plan. I shall go ahead, wearing your dress!



No, No! They'll catch you and kill you!



There's no other way! They may even trace Gurudev's place and reach here! So please heed my advice.



TOO MUCH WISDOM IS FOLLY

NEWS FLASH

EVEREST IS EXPENSIVE

Many youngsters these days have taken to trekking and mountaineering as a hobby. Those who have joined the NCC (National Cadet Corps) invariably undergo training in mountain-climbing. And anyone who has taken this hobby seriously will always aspire to climb Everest sometime in his or her life. But did you ever know that you have to pay a fee for climbing the tallest (8,847m) peak in the world? The charge this year was 10,000 dollars (Rs. 3,50,000) per climber to be paid to the Government of Nepal which has eight of the world's highest (above 8,000 metres) mountains in its territory. This season, more than 80 expeditions were led to Everest alone, with some 57 climbers reaching the peak. One of them was the Everest hero, Tenzing Norgay's grandson, 31-year-old Jangling Norgay. He was accompanied by filmmakers David Finlay Brishers and Edmond Carl Veesters, both of whom stood on the peak for the third time in their life. In 1992, a record was created when 58 climbers reached the peak. Another record was made the next year, when as many as 35 climbers reached the summit in one day. Someone wryly commented that the peak had become "one big picnic ground"! Nepal which collected a total of 640,000 dollars this year, has been worrying about the "traffic jam" en route to Everest. So, it has been enforcing the "one-route one-team" restriction. Nepal itself sent an expedition this year—for a different purpose: to collect the trash left by the climbers over the years and "clean" Everest. The Nepali sherpas are reported to have collected 2,000 kg of garbage. According to the team leader, another 15,000 kg of ten-year-old trash is still to be collected.

ON BOARD A BOTTLE

Three years ago, when Vicki Thomas, of Bognor Regis, Southern England, was only 8 years old, she sealed a message in a bottle and threw it into the sea. It was picked up by Andrew Fitch (29) in Geraldton, Western Australia, the other day. He sent a reply to Vicki: "The bottle seems to have travelled a long way (16,000 km)! I wonder if it is a record." Unfortunately, the Guinness Book of Records has no separate entry for travels undertaken by ocean-going bottles.

LOST AND FOUND

In this case, it was a camel which went back to its owner after five years during which time it was taken as "missing". Several camels in a particular area in Kuwait strayed away in the wake of Iraq's occupation of that country resulting in the 1991-92 Gulf War. This camel returned to its master, Mohammed al-Auwaisheer on a fine March morning—in good health. How did he reward the animal? He wrote a poem in praise of its loyalty!





ATLANTA SNIPPETS

Four hours, four words

Almost one-third of the four-hour opening ceremony of the Atlanta Olympic Games was taken up by the traditional March Past of the participants numbering some 11,000. It was no surprise, as they had come from as many as 197 countries. And the least time was taken by U.S. President Bill Clinton while declaring the Centennial Games open. He had to say only four words: "Let the Games begin!"

The smallest among the participating nations is the South Pacific island of Nauru, which has a population of only 8,000. Its athletes are not very ambitious, but they will be happy if their popular weightlifter wins a gold. The people adore him so much that they had issued a series of postage stamps with his portrait.

The surprise of all



Sports enthusiasts debated this for days together: who will lit the Olympic flame to denote the start of the

Games? Several names – all of world-renowned sportsmen and women – were

guessed. But as usual, it was kept a well-guarded secret. Then he emerged from darkness around. The "Greatest". Who else, but Muhammad Ali, the world heavyweight champion, himself? His has been a face most familiar to sports lovers in the past half-a-century. The torch was taken to him by swimmer Janet Evans, a three times gold medallist. Though his hands trembled, because of a disease he suffers from, he lit the end of a wire which carried the flame into the cauldron that rose 132 ft. above him. This touching moment was watched by nearly 90,000 spectators inside the stadium and millions and millions of others who sat glued to their TV sets. An equally emotionally charged moment was when Coretta Scott King, wife of the civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, who belonged to Atlanta, handed the torch to her son, Rev. Dexter King, during one of the last laps of its journey from Athens. The very last torch-bearer was Al Oerter who had won the Discus Throw Gold medal in 1956, 1960, 1964, and 1968 for the U.S.A. Incidentally, for Janet, the 1996 Games will be her last.

Tabla for theme song

"Call to the nation" – the theme song of Atlanta Games – had the support of several music instruments from different nations. From India went the *tabla*, *thavil*, *kanjira*, *dhol*, and *pakhwaj*. The *tabla*



was played by none other than the maestro Zakir Hussain, who also had a big role in setting the tune of the theme song. He paired with four other leading musi-

cians in this assignment, for which he did not take any remuneration. He considered it a great honour.

Izzi missing!

"Where's Izzy?" This question bothered the thousands of spectators who had gathered for the opening ceremony. The mascot of the Atlanta Games was not seen in the parade at the start of the



Games. It (being a computer-designed figure, Izzi or WHATIZIT is not gender-identified) was last seen at the Hartfield

airport welcoming the athletes arriving at the Games city. Did it get dizzy by the exercise?

For grabs

By the time the Atlanta Games end, 604 gold medals, an equal number of silver, and 630 bronze medals would have adorned the necks of 1,838 athletes and players if, of course, some of them had not grabbed more than one – like the Belarussian Vitaly Scherbo, who pocketed as many as six golds in gymnastics at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992. The medals of the Centennial Games have one unique feature: for the first time in the history of the Games,

they will depict on one side the specific sport for which it is being awarded. On the other, the 5-ring Olympic motif appears. Did you know that the motif was designed by an Italian artist – Giuseppe Cassidi – for the Amsterdam Games in 1928?

First Gold

The first Gold medal of the first day of the Games

was bagged by Renata Mauer of Poland, in the women's 10 metre air



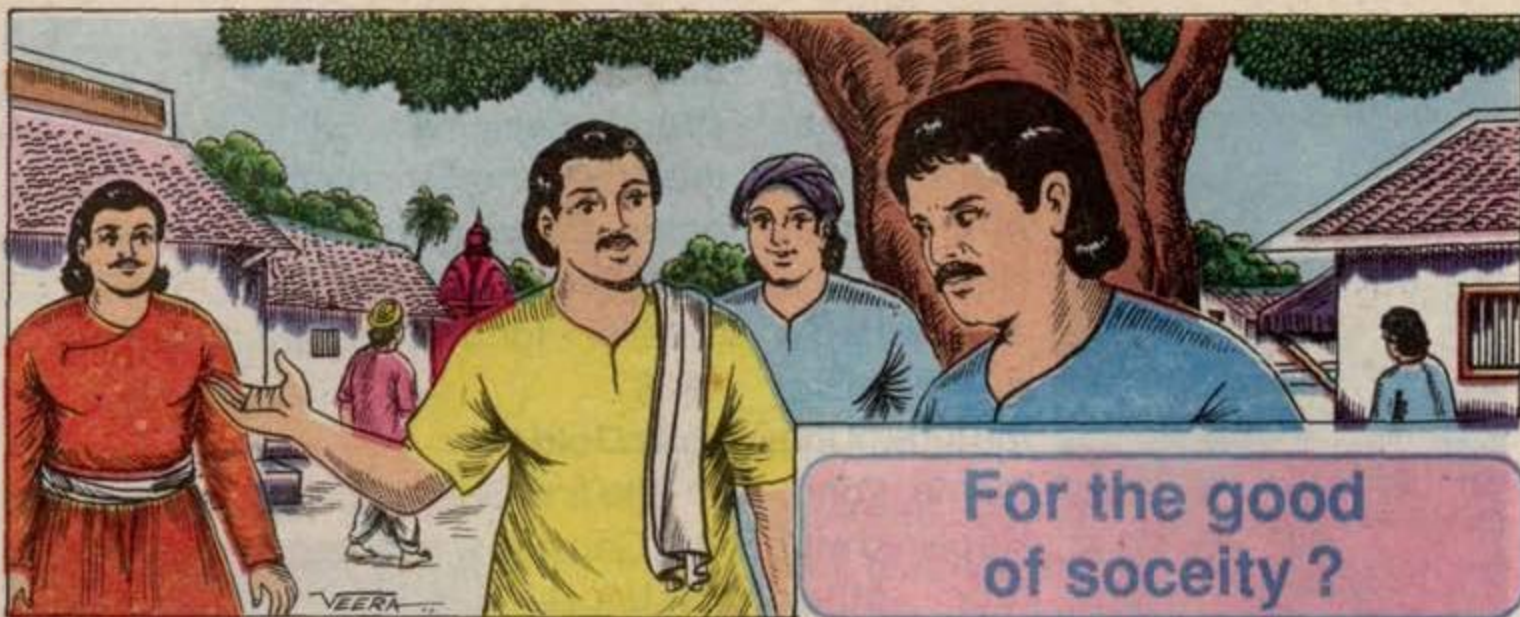
rifle event. Germany's Petra Horneber took the silver. In the preliminary round, Petra had set a new Olympic record. But in the last shot, she could not hit the bullseye. Mauer had a better overall score. The first gold for men went to Roberto di Donna, of Italy, in men's 10m air pistol.

Gesture to a friend

Swimmers Angel Martino and Trisha Henry are chums. In February, they were preparing to represent the University of Illinois at a swim meet, when doctors disclosed that Trisha had cancer. Since then Angel had been eager to do something to lessen the disappointment in her friend. She decided to compete at the Olympics and win a medal for her friend's sake. On the second day of the Games, she won a medal – the first for a U.S. participant. What if it was only a bronze? She promptly handed it to Trisha, who was watching her friend from the galleries. "It was one of the nicest things anyone had done for me," she said.

(Next month: All the world records at Atlanta and more!)





For the good of socieity ?

Sunder and Chander belonged to the same village. Sunder would complete any work given to him efficiently and fast, while Chander by nature was lazy. He would leave any work given to him by the villagers half-done. They chided him. "Why don't you follow Sunder? See how he completes his work! He's very enthusiastic and prompt, too. You're a lazy-bones, good for nothing!"

One day, a *sanyasi* arrived in that village. He apparently had some magic powers, and naturally people flocked to him with all sorts of requests and demands. He obliged them, but demanded a fee. The villagers paid him, and when their requests were met, they even paid him extra money.

Somehow Sunder did not like him. Why should the *sanyasi* ask for money? he argued. A real *sanyasi* would not have any need for money. Sunder gave expression to his doubts, which agitated the villagers. They threw a challenge to him. "If you feel

that he is a fake, why don't you prove it?"

Strangely, Chander too had some reservations about the *sanyasi*. On this point, he and Sunder shared the same thoughts. However, there was rivalry between them, because Chander wanted to steal a march over Sunder in establishing that the *sanyasi* was an imposter. He managed to reach where the *sanyasi* was staying, at dead of night. He saw the *sanyasi*'s chest and stomach heaving as he took deep breaths. Chander had no doubt that the *sanyasi* was asleep. But he was suspicious about his bushy moustache. Was it real? Chander stared at the moustache for a long time and came to the conclusion that it was something like the one worn by drama players. He went closer to the *sanyasi* and caught hold of the moustache which came off in his hands! The *sanyasi* woke up with a start. But by then Chander had made good his escape.

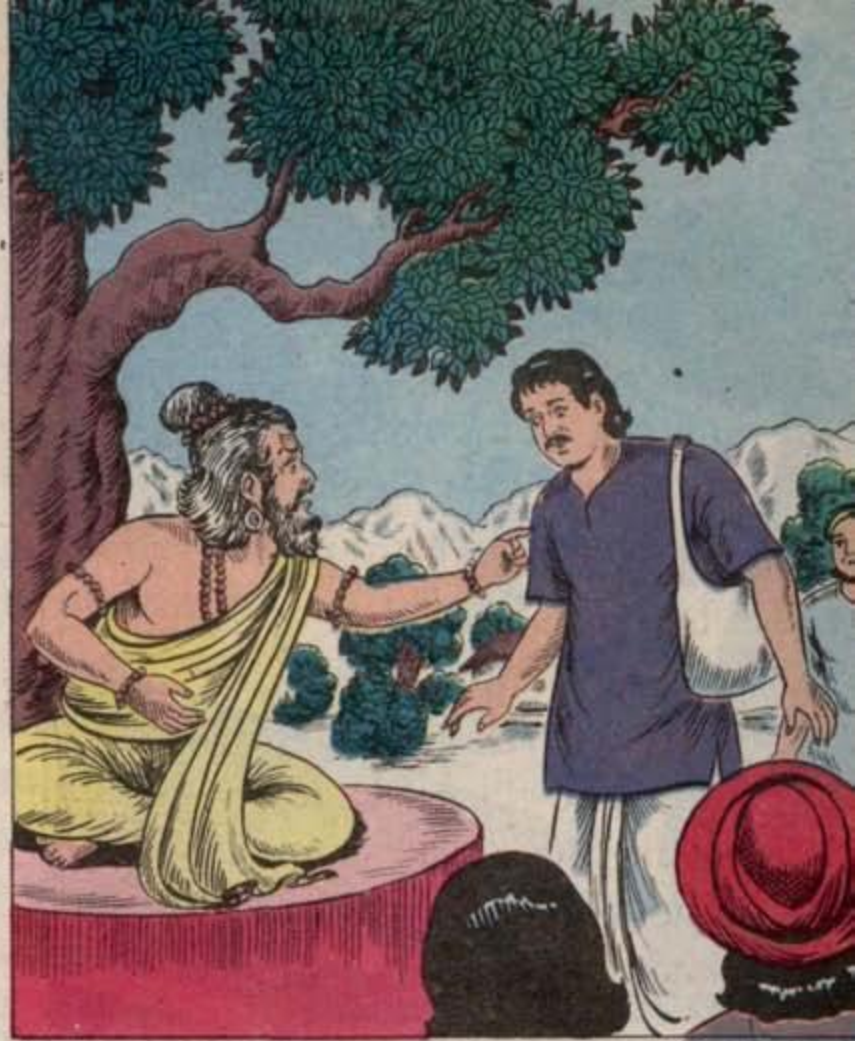
Next day, the sanyasi was once again meeting the villagers, when Chander approached him. He then turned to the audience and said aloud: "This man is a fake sanyasi. Last night, I took away his artificial moustache!"

The villagers gave a derisive laughter, because the sanyasi had a moustache on! Only then did Chander notice that the man was not without moustache. But how could that happen? He did not give up. "I tell you, I did pluck his moustache last night. It came off in my hands and I put it in my bag here. What he wears now is also artificial. I shall pluck that as well." And he leaned to grab at the moustache.

The sanyasi could not tolerate such an affront any longer. He pushed Chander away. "Curse upon you! Anyone who harasses me will eat the dust. Let the thunderbolt fall on you! If you say that you have my moustache in your bag, where's it? You take it out and show it to everybody here."

Chander took off his bag from his shoulders and put his arm into it to pull out the moustache. There was no moustache! He was baffled. "What's this? I myself had plucked his moustache off the face and safely put it in my bag. I am dead certain about it. I am sure he has done some magic and has hidden it somewhere!" he cried aloud.

But none in the audience would



believe him. In fact, some of them even apologised for Chander's misdemeanour. He felt ashamed. His face dropped and he slowly moved away from the place. On his way, he met Sunder and told him all that had happened.

"You were very hasty, Chander," said Sunder. "In such things, one has to be very cautious and careful. I too have no doubt that he is an imposter. And this time he has escaped from your clutches. He may not, when I catch him. You just wait and see!"

Chander looked at him in wonderment. "What do you propose to do?" he asked Sunder.

"I haven't been sitting idle, Chander," said Sunder. "I've collected





a lot of details about the sanyasi. He belongs to Harinagar. He has a wife and three children. All of them are happy. Every month they receive a decent sum of money. They don't know how he earns all that money. If we were to disclose all these details, then our people will harass him and he'll escape to another place and continue his activities. -So, we must see that he goes away from here as if he was rejoining his family. This should be our strategy."

Next morning Sunder went to the place where the sanyasi was expected to meet the villagers. He accosted Sunder as if he was one of his admirers and spoke to him. Sunder remained smiling all the while. "You imposter!"

Sunder snapped. "I've collected all information — about your village and your family. Now don't think you can fool us !"

The sanyasi went pale in his face. Suddenly he became listless. Sunder put him at ease. "Don't worry. I haven't told all this to anyone. But I would expect you to return every paisa that you had collected from the villagers here and then return to Harinagar, and lead a happy life with your family enjoying whatever you have earned. And you've no other choice."

The sanyasi accepted Sunder's advice and went away from that village.

Chander's mother used to walk up to the nearby river to fetch water for household purposes. One day, she sprained her leg. She called her son. "Chander, tell Govinda to get us a few pots of water. I won't be able to go to the river for some days."

Govinda used to do odd jobs for the villagers. But he was nowhere to be seen. Chander roamed the place for sometime and then was returning home when he saw Govinda carrying four vessels from grocer Parameswar's house. He called him, half-a-dozen times; he even clapped his hands aloud. But Govinda did not stop. He continued walking. Chander followed him. He saw him going into his hut, and closing the door behind him. Chander got curious.

The door was half open and Chander peeped through. He saw Govinda pouring some liquid from a tin into one of the vessels. It was evident that he was adulterating the oil in the vessel. Chander now saw him coming out. He hid behind a tree and kept a watch. The man carried the vessels back to Parameswar's house. Chander assumed that the grocer was indulging in adulteration with the help of Govinda. Chander could not brook the fact that the grocer was cheating the public. Anyway he was certain that he had enough evidence to make a complaint.

As he walked back to his house, he ran into Sunder once again. "Ah! I was coming to you, Sunder!" said Chander, excitedly. "Do you know that our grocer Parameswar sells adulterated stuff? Govinda is helping him in that activity. I just saw him adulterating cooking oil. I saw this with my own eyes!" After a pause, he added, "Sunder, this time I did not jump to conclusions, and I'm not leaving the matter at that. My next move is to find out from where Govinda gets the stuff to adulterate oil."

Sunder, on the other hand, was too excited to keep the news to himself. He told his neighbours on either side; the three of them then went out to tell their friends. In no time a crowd had gathered in front of Parameswar's residence and they all began to shout,

asking for an explanation from the grocer.

Parameswar came out, and when he heard that Govinda was involved in this nefarious activity, he was left speechless. "No! Honestly I don't know anything about this. I haven't given any instructions to Govinda!" he protested.

By then, Sunder had gone to Govinda's house and brought back a tin. Parameswar took a look at it. He was horrified. He sent for Govinda. "What's this, Govinda?" he asked him angrily.

"Please forgive me, master!" said Govinda, pleadingly. "I'm not doing this on my own, nor did you ask me to do so. It was master's wife who wanted me to do this for her sake; the extra money that you'll get, she wants to spend it on a silk sari without your knowledge! Fortunately, it has been detected on the first day itself. I haven't done it earlier. Please forgive me, master."

The villagers were all praise for Sunder. They knew that the grocer was innocent, but warned him that the whole thing should be a lesson to him.

When Chander heard of all that had happened, he called on Sunder. "How come after advising me not to be hasty, and that I should weigh the pros and cons of everything, you yourself rushed to carry the news to everybody and organise an agitation

in front of the grocer's residence? And, you have cornered all praise for yourself. In fact, it was I who gave you that piece of information," Chander protested.

"No Chander, I was not trying to belittle you or your efforts, or grab all praise for myself," explained Sunder. "In fact, I told everybody that it was you who had brought the information to me. And I also warned everybody of the adulterated stuff they might be buying. It was something urgent that they were all alerted in right time. Otherwise, the adulterated oil would have reached many homes and would have become a health hazard. As a matter of fact, if we had delayed the information, we would have been at great fault. We ourselves have to distinguish between which is urgent, which is not."

"Then, what made you delay action against the sanyasi?" queried Chander.

"There was no necessity to punish him, was there?" said Sunder. "My

aim was to warn him against taking advantage of gullible people and to reform him so that he wouldn't betray the confidence reposed in him by society. Parameswar's case was different. He would have been accused of committing a heinous crime against innocent people. Here, discretion, contemplation, and caution had no place. The need was to catch immediate public attention."

"But how does one decide, which needs urgent attention, and which would call for deeper contemplation?" asked Chander.

"Oh! That has to be decided by each person using his own discretion. Only thing is, you have to be guarded against being selfish about it. Nothing should be done to benefit just oneself. Whatever one does must be for the good of society."

Chander was quite convinced of his friend's arguments. Later, he would always remember what Sunder had told him.



Golden Hour - No. 4 : Answers



1) The radio play was based on the novel 'The War of the Worlds' by H.G. Wells

2) Diana. This Moon goddess of the Romans was also goddess of the hunt.



3. A white dwarf is an old collapsed star that is in the process of dying.

4. Venus. It is the only planet in our solar system that rotates from east to west.



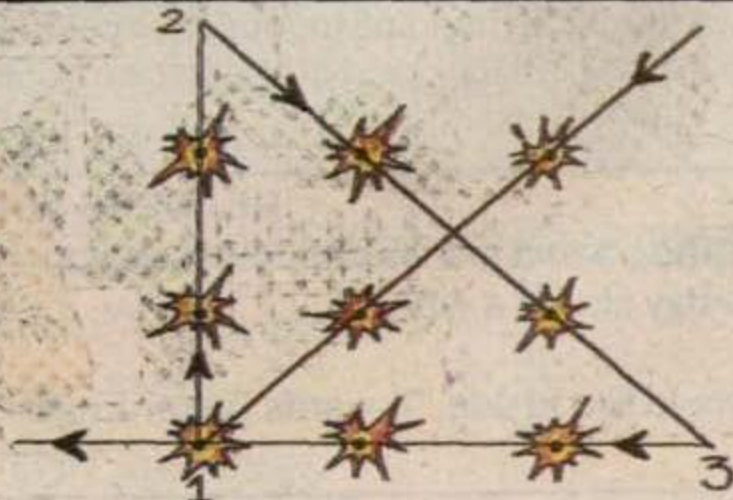
5) Ferdinand Magellan. The two galaxies named after him are the Large Magellanic Cloud and the Small Magellanic Cloud. These are the nearest galaxies to us.

6) The largest crater on earth is in Arizona, North America.

7) Halley's Comet. This comet appears every 76 years or so. The last time it appeared was in 1986.

A SPACE ADVENTURE

This is the route the space ship took for the attack





Which country is known as the 'Land of the Rising Sun'? Why is it so called?
– P.S. Harini, Hyderabad

That the sun rises in the east (and sets in the west) is an established fact. The world has been divided into the eastern hemisphere and western hemisphere and also the northern and southern hemispheres. In the eastern hemisphere, Japan is shown at the easternmost end, and naturally it is believed that when the sun rises, it rises first in Japan before it 'moves' to other parts of the world.

What is 'graduated pension'?

– Vinay Kumar, Gargam

When a person retires after serving in different graded posts during his or her career – like some years in the army, some years in Civil Service, some years in the Railways, and some in Educational service – the pension is calculated in such a way as to benefit the employee the most. This is known as Graduated pension. Nowadays, almost all the services have been brought under a uniform pay scale and there is no need for computing a graduated pension.

What is meant by the expression imperialism?

– P.S.P. Prasad, Hyderabad

If any one country tries to dominate others, either by direct rule or by less obvious means, like control of markets for goods or raw materials, such a state of affairs is known as imperialism. In the 19th century, imperialism took the form of establishment of colonies and imposition of rule over them. India was a colony in the British empire and was directly ruled by Britain. People described it as British imperialism, against which we fought demanding independence. Britain will give up its last Crown colony – Hong Kong – in 1997, and give it back to China, which had ceded it in 1898 on a 99 year lease.

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– Dhananjay Patro, Bhubaneswar

I would like to see "Towards Better English" in book form.

– P.S.P. Prasad, Hyderabad



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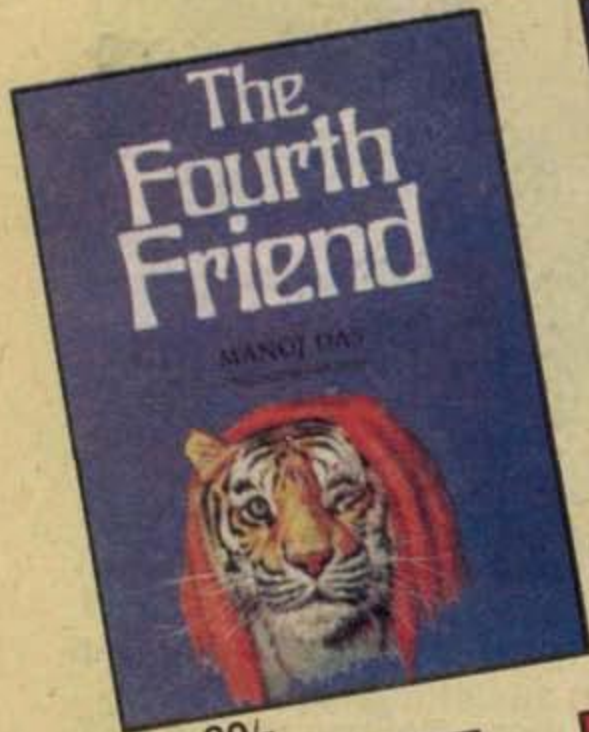
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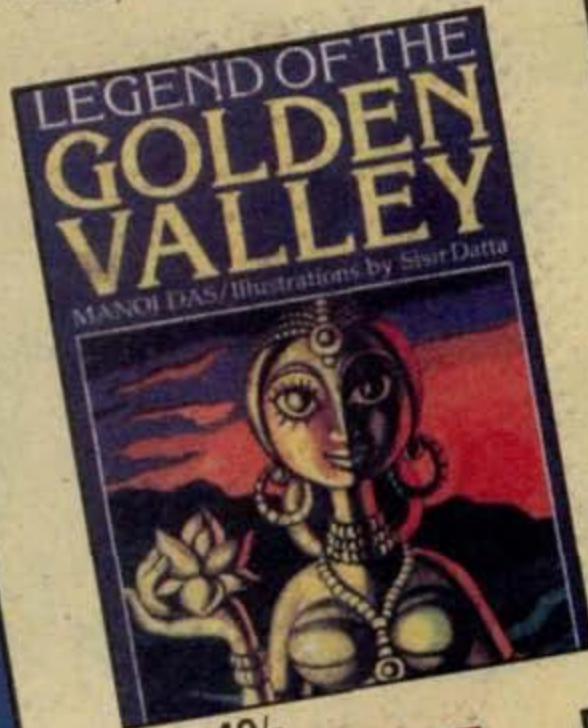


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MAHABHARATA: Soon after King Jayadratha makes his unsuccessful attempt to kidnap Draupadi when the Pandava princes are away on a hunting trip, sage Markandeya calls on them and narrates the story of Savitri who marries Prince Satyavan, then leading the life of an exile. She is told that the prince has only one year's life left to live. Savitri keeps a constant vigil on her husband. On the fateful day, she pleads with the God of Death to spare her husband's life. Markandeya tells them how she is able to save the life of Satyavan, and compares Draupadi with Savitri.

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